6C emphasis (2): cleft sentences

GRAMMAR BANK

When we want to focus attention on or emphasize one part of a sentence, we can do this by adding certain words or phrases to the beginning of the sentence. This is sometimes called a 'cleft sentence'.

	More emphatic sentence
1 beginning with *What* or *All*	
I need a coffee.	**What I need is** a coffee.
I don't like the weather here.	**What I don't like here is** the weather.
I just want to travel.	**All I want is** to travel.
I only touched it!	**All I did was** touch it.
2 beginning with *What happens is...* / *What happened was...*	
You do a test and then you have an interview.	**What happens is** (that) you do a test and then you have an interview.
We left our passports at home.	**What happened was** (that) we left our passports at home.
3 beginning with *The person who...*, *The place where...*, *The first / last time...*, *The reason why...*, etc.	
I spoke to the manager.	**The person (who / that) I spoke to was** the manager.
We stayed in a five-star hotel.	**The place where we stayed was** a five-star hotel.
I last saw him on Saturday.	**The last time I saw him was** on Saturday.
I bought it because it was cheap.	**The reason (why / that) I bought it was** that / because it was cheap.
4 beginning with *It*	
A boy in my class won the prize.	**It was a boy in my class who** won the prize.
We had the meeting last Friday.	**It was last Friday when** we had the meeting.
They charged us extra for the wine.	**It was the wine (that)** they charged us extra for.

1 We can make some kinds of sentences more emphatic by beginning with *What* (= the thing) or *All* (= the only thing) + clause + *be*, and then the part of the sentence we want to emphasize.
2 To emphasize an event or sequence of events, we can begin with *What happens is (that)...* *What happened was (that)...*
3 We can also make part of a sentence more emphatic by beginning with an expression like *The person who...*, *The place where...*, *The first / last time that...*, *The reason why...*, etc. + clause + *be*, with the emphasized part of the sentence at the end.
4 We can also use *It is / was* + the emphasized part of the sentence + a relative clause.

⚠ If the emphasized part is a pronoun, we normally use the object pronoun after *It is / was*, e.g. *It was me who paid the bill.* NOT ~~*It was I who paid the bill.*~~

a Complete the sentences with one word.

The *last* time I saw my brother was at his 40th birthday party.

1 _____ was my father who told me not to marry him.
2 _____ I hate about Sundays is knowing you have to work the next day.
3 The _____ why I want you to come early is so that we can have some time on our own before the others arrive.
4 After you've sent in your CV, what _____ next is that you get called for an interview.
5 It's not my fault you can't find them! _____ I did was tidy up your desk a bit.
6 The _____ where we're going to have lunch is a sort of artist's café near the theatre.
7 _____ happened was that I lost the piece of paper with my flight details on it.
8 It was _____ who told Angela about the party. I'm terribly sorry. I didn't know you hadn't invited her.

b Rewrite the sentences with the **bold** word.

I only need a small piece of paper.
ALL
All I need is a small piece of paper.

1 She left her husband because he cheated on her.
REASON
_____ he cheated on her.

2 We stopped in an absolutely beautiful place for lunch.
PLACE
_____ was absolutely beautiful.

3 We got stuck in an enormous traffic jam.
HAPPENED
_____ we got stuck in an enormous traffic jam.

4 They didn't apologize for arriving late, which really annoyed me.
WHAT
_____ they didn't apologize for arriving late.

5 A girl from my town won the silver medal.
IT
_____ won the silver medal.

6 I only said that I didn't like her dress.
ALL
_____ that I didn't like her dress.

7 I like my Aunt Emily best of all my relatives.
PERSON
_____ is my Aunt Emily.

8 You pick up your tickets at the box office.
HAPPENS
_____ you pick up your tickets at the box office.

9 Right now you need to sit down and put your feet up.
WHAT
_____ to sit down and put your feet up.

10 I first met Serena at a conference in Berlin.
TIME
_____ at a conference in Berlin.

LIVEWORKSHEETS