## 75 Emphasis (1) cleft sentences

The 2006 Nobel Prize for Literature was awarded to the Turkish author Orhan Pamuk. It was his exploration of the clashes and interactions of different cultures that brought him the award.



## 1 Form and use of cleft sentences

In a divided or cleft sentence, information which could be given in one clause is divided into two parts, each with its own verb:

*Vanessa has made the greatest impact.* (normal sentence: single clause, one verb)

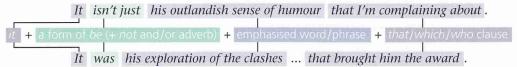
*It is Vanessa* who has made the greatest impact . (cleft sentence: two clauses, two verbs)

We use this pattern to emphasise new information, give explanations or make a contrast with a previous statement:

All of the Redgrave family are gifted actors. But it is **Vanessa** who has made the greatest impact in the world of feature films.

## 2 It cleft sentences

It cleft sentences have this pattern:



We can use *it* to emphasise the following:

(neutral)	→ Tom saw Will Smith at the awards party last night.
subject	→ It was <b>Tom</b> who saw Will Smith at the awards party last night.
object	→ It was <b>Will Smith</b> that Tom saw at the awards party last night.
adverbial phrases	→ It was <b>last night</b> that Tom saw Will Smith at the awards party.  It was <b>at the awards party</b> that Tom saw Will Smith last night.

We can use *when* and *where* (instead of *that*) in subordinate clauses of time and place: *It was in January when the test results were published.* 

It's **in Green Street market where** the best bargains can be found.



We do not use *how, why,* or *what* in this way:

X It was greed why he did it. ✓ It was because of greed that he did it.

**X** It is using a calculator how he does it. ✓ It is by using a calculator that he does it.

X It is the speed of the ride what is so thrilling. ✓ It is the speed of the ride that is so thrilling.

We can reverse it + verb and the emphasised element in it clefts, but only in a very formal, literary style:

And thus Cézanne it was who took the first steps towards Impressionism.

Less literary: And so it was Cézanne who took the first steps towards Impressionism.