

UNIT 10: RELATIVE CLAUSES

This unit makes the important point that a **relative clause** and the **noun** that it modifies make up one single noun phrase, as in the bracketed portion below:

1. I heard [a song which was composed by a 12th-century nun].

Quite often, students fail to identify [a song which was composed by a 12th-century nun] as a single noun phrase, on a par with [a song] or [a beautiful song]. When you see a clause directly following a noun, it is most likely to be a relative clause, so look out for it, and treat all of it (noun + relative clause) as a single unit. This may seem a bit strange for a Chinese speaker, but it's really no harder than getting used to 'He yesterday arrived' (Chinese) vs. 'He arrived yesterday' (English). It's a matter of getting used to this pattern in your mind, and this unit will help you to do that.

QUESTION 1:

The subjects and objects are underlined, and identified as 'S' or 'O':

1. He (S) knows the answer (O).
2. He (S) knows that matter is a form of energy (O).
3. He (S) knows the formula which Einstein discovered (O)
4. The rumour (S) is true.
5. What he told me (S) is true.
6. The rumour which he told me (S) is true.

QUESTION 2:

The noun phrases are bracketed and underlined below:

1. [The Egyptian plane which disappeared over the Atlantic Ocean] was carrying [nearly 200 passengers].
2. [The news which most excited Hong Kongers in recent years] was [the Disneyland deal].
3. [The teacher] scolded [the student who forgot to do his homework].
4. *Life Is Beautiful* is [a movie which can make you both laugh and cry].
5. I can't stand [people who smoke non-stop].
6. He finally got [the job that he wanted].

QUESTION 3:

Here are just some suggestions:

1. The bus which goes to the airport is late today.
2. The waiter who spilled soup on the customer was fired.
3. The student who got an 'A' in the final exam was very happy.
4. She married the man who had been her best friend all her life.
5. The World Trade Centre was the building which was destroyed by two planes on 11 September 2001.

QUESTION 4:

The 'special word' is highlighted:

1. The Egyptian plane **which** disappeared over the Atlantic Ocean was carrying nearly 200 passengers.
2. The news **which** most excited Hong Kongers in recent years was the Disneyland deal.
3. The teacher scolded the student **who** forgot to do his homework.
4. *Life Is Beautiful* is a movie **which** can make you both laugh and cry.
5. I can't stand people **who** smoke non-stop.
6. He finally got the job **that** he wanted.

QUESTION 5:

The noun which the relative pronoun stands for is given in *italics* below:

1. The *movie* **which** won the Best Picture Award was *Gladiator*.
2. The *movie* **which** I saw last week was *Gladiator*.
3. The *actor* **who** made me laugh so much was Roberto Benigni.
4. The *actor* **whom** everyone loved so much was Roberto Benigni.
5. The *song* **that** Celine Dion sang in *Titanic* was 'My heart will go on'.
6. The *singer* **that** sang 'My heart will go on' was Celine Dion.

QUESTION 6:

The function of the relative pronoun is indicated by the letters 'S' (subject) and 'O' (object) after it.

1. The movie **which (S)** won the Best Picture Award was *Gladiator*.
2. The movie **which (O)** I saw last week was *Gladiator*.
3. The actor **who (S)** made me laugh so much was Roberto Benigni.
4. The actor **whom (O)** everyone loved so much was Roberto Benigni.
5. The song **that (O)** Celine Dion sang in *Titanic* was 'My heart will go on'.
6. The singer **that (S)** sang 'My heart will go on' was Celine Dion.

QUESTION 7:

The corrections are indicated in **bold print**

1. The early symptom of people **who** lack vitamin A is night blindness.

2. One of the plants **which** contains carotene is the carrot.
3. The heat **which** came from the earth would make the mud become rock.

QUESTION 8:

1. The movie **which** won the Best Picture Award was *Gladiator*.
2. * The movie won the Best Picture Award was *Gladiator*.
3. The movie **which** I saw last week was *Gladiator*.
4. The movie I saw last week was *Gladiator*.
5. The actor **who** made me laugh so much was Roberto Benigni.
6. * The actor made me laugh so much was Roberto Benigni.
7. The actor **whom** everyone loved so much was Roberto Benigni.
8. The actor everyone loved so much was Roberto Benigni.

ANSWER: A relative pronoun can be left out only if it is the **object** in the relative clause (as in sentences 4 and 8).

QUESTION 9:

Answers will vary. Possible answers include:

1. someone who is rich and intelligent
2. someone who is honest and authoritative
3. someone who is knowledgeable and cares about her students
4. a program that entertains as well as informs
5. a place that has ancient historical sites
6. an apartment that has a nice view and clean air
7. books that have an intriguing plot
8. students who are smart and work hard

QUESTION 10:

1. Vehicles which are abandoned by their owners will be towed away.
2. Vehicles abandoned by their owners will be towed away.
3. Students who fail the test will be required to re-take it.
4. Students failing the test will be required to re-take it.
5. People who live on Lantau Island are very excited about Disneyland.
6. People living on Lantau Island are very excited about Disneyland.
7. Every suspect who is arrested by the police is entitled to legal aid.
8. Every suspect arrested by the police is entitled to legal aid.

ANSWER: **Non-finite** relative clauses have a **non-finite verb**, and no relative pronoun

QUESTION 11:

1. Students planning to study abroad must apply for a student visa.
2. Towns destroyed in/by the earthquake will be rebuilt with international aid.
3. Motorists driving through the burning tunnel were overcome by the heavy smoke.
4. The most important drug discovered in the 20th century was penicillin.

QUESTION 13:

The (b) sentences sound better. That's because the (a) sentences have an **indefinite subject**, which tend to make them sound a little unnatural.

When you try to find Chinese equivalents for the English sentences, you will discover that the (a) sentences, with an indefinite subject, are much more unacceptable in Chinese. It is in fact necessary to produce sentences like (b), beginning with '有' (= 'there is').

QUESTION 14:

The corrections are given *in italics* below (there's more than one correct answer):

1. * There were over 80% of them agreed with that.
Over 80% of them agreed with that.
There were over 80% of them who agreed with that.
2. * There were about 23 percent of them disagreed with the importance of leadership ability.
About 23 percent of them disagreed with the importance of leadership ability.
There were about 23 percent of them who disagreed with the importance of leadership ability.
3. * There are many students study in the library.
There are many students studying in the library.
4. * There was a large number of people worked in the wholesale industry.
A large number of people worked in the wholesale industry.
There were a large number of people working in the wholesale industry.

QUESTION 15:

- 1a. A man is washing the car
- 1b. There is a man washing the car.
- 2a. A man has been arrested 20 times by the police.
- 2b. There is a man who has been arrested 20 times by the police.
- 3a. A student scored 8 distinctions in the exam.
- 3b. There was a student who scored 8 distinctions in the exam.

ANSWER: When we change a main clause into an existential construction ('there is/are...'), we either (i) change the verb into a non-finite, **present participle** form (e.g. *washing*, NOT *is washing*), or (ii) change the rest of the main clause after the subject into a **finite relative clause** (e.g. 'who has been arrested 20 times by the police', NOT 'has been arrested 20 times by the police').

QUESTION 16:

Here are some suggestions (there may be other possibilities)

1. There are 5 books **recommended** by the teacher as essential.
2. There were many people **sleeping** on the floor after the party.
3. There was a student **who said** that the subject was boring.
4. There will be many students **applying** for the new course.
5. Is there anyone **waiting** for the bus?