

**1 Defining relative clauses**

Defining relative clauses tell us some essential information about the things or people they refer to:

*The picture that hangs next to Margaret's portrait is the one I like best.*

If we remove the words *that hangs next to Margaret's portrait* we don't know which picture Jasper is talking about.

**Defining relative clauses:**

◆ may begin with the relative pronouns *who* (for people), *which* (for things), *that* (for things and people).

◆ may have *who*, *which* or *that* as the subject or object of the relative clause:

... *the picture which / that hangs next to Margaret's portrait* ... (*which / that* is the subject of the relative clause)

... *the woman who / that he married* ... (*who / that* is the object of the relative clause, and *he* is the subject)

◆ very often omit the relative pronoun when it is the object of the relative clause:

*The painting we're looking at now* ... or *The painting which / that we're looking at now* ...

◆ are never separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.

◆ are used in writing and speaking.

▲ We always omit the object pronoun (*her*, *him*, *it*, etc.) when we make a relative clause:

*We know little about the woman that he married.* (not ~~the woman that he married her~~)

*The next painting shows Edmund's wife Margaret, who he married in 1605.* (not ~~who he married her in 1605~~)

**2 Non-defining relative clauses**

Non-defining relative clauses tell us some extra information about the things or people they refer to:

*The next painting shows Edmund's wife Margaret, who he married in 1605.*

If we remove the words *who he married in 1605*, we still know who Jasper is talking about. It is Edmund's wife, Margaret.

**Non-defining relative clauses:**

◆ always begin with the relative pronouns *who* (for people) and *which* (for things).

◆ may have *who* or *which* (but never *that*) as the subject or object of the relative clause:

*The building, which is very old, costs a lot of money to repair.* (not ~~that is very old~~)

*The castle's owner, who we've just seen, enjoys meeting visitors.* (not ~~that we've just seen~~)

◆ never omit the relative pronoun.

◆ must be separated from the rest of the sentence by commas.

◆ are more common in writing than in speaking.

**3 Relative pronouns and prepositions**

Both defining and non-defining relative clauses:

◆ can begin with *whose* (instead of *his / her / their*), *when* (for times) and *where* (for places):

*William, whose wife Jane was a famous beauty, had nine children.*

*Here they are in this picture from the year when the youngest was born.*

*This has been my family home, where we've lived for over four hundred years, since the time of Edmund Clarendon.*

◆ can begin with *whom* (for people) as the object of a clause (this is mainly in written English, and is increasingly rare):

*His girlfriend, whom he neglected, became very depressed.*

◆ usually have any prepositions at the end of the clause:

*It's the one which he was captain of during a famous naval victory.*

*The girl he fell in love with was extremely tall.*

*Peter, who my father used to work with, has become a government minister.*

◆ in formal English, sometimes have a preposition at the beginning of the clause, followed by *which* (for things) or *whom* (for people):

*It's the one of which he was captain during a famous naval victory.*

*The girl with whom he fell in love was extremely tall.*

*Peter, with whom my father used to work, has become a government minister.*

▲ We cannot use *that* after a preposition in a relative clause:

*The Conference Room, in which the meeting was held, was not really big enough.* (not ~~in that the meeting was held~~)

▲ A defining relative clause can:

◆ begin with *why*, after the words *the reason*:

*This victory was the reason why he became a national hero.*

◆ omit *why* and *when*:

*That was the reason we went there.* (= *That was the reason why we went there.*)  
*I remember the day I met you.* (= *I remember the day when I met you.*)