NOUN CLAUSES

CEFR Level C2 — Mastery

English Language Worksheets | 4 Worksheets + Answer Key

Worksheet 1: The Noun Clause as a Rhetorical Instrument

At C2, complement choice governs presupposition, emphasis and evasion.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

Rhetorical uses of the noun clause

Device	Effect	Example
wh-cleft as verdict	Fronts the omission; delivers the blow in end-focus	“What he never explains is where the money went.”
factive smuggling	A factive verb makes the complement a shared premise	“We regret that mistakes were made.”
hedged factive	Concedes and denies at once — logically slippery	“He regrets that he may have misled the House.”
subjunctive as authority	The mandative form asserts institutional will	“We require that he be removed.”
extraposition as evasion	Dummy ‘it’ removes the agent from view	“It was decided that the file be destroyed.”
stranded noun clause	A fragment lands as an afterthought or accusation	“He apologised. That he had been caught.”
accumulating complements	Stacked that-clauses build an indictment	“They knew that it was wrong, that it was illegal, that it would be found.”

PART A — **Identify the device**

Name the device in each sentence and explain its rhetorical effect in context.

1. “The board regrets that its chairman's conduct may have fallen short of expectations.”
Context: a corporate statement

Device: _____ Effect: _____

2. “What the committee never asked is who had authorised the payment.”
Context: a newspaper leader

Device: _____ Effect: _____

3. “It was determined that the records be disposed of.”
Context: an internal memorandum

Device: _____ Effect: _____

4. “They understood that the drug was untested, that the trial was rigged, that patients would die, and that nobody would ever be charged.”
Context: a work of investigative history

Device: _____ Effect: _____

PART B — **Transform for effect**

Rewrite each sentence using the device indicated. The effect must be deliberate.

1 Original: “The report is silent about who profited.”
Device: wh-cleft as verdict
→ _____

2 Original: “Somebody in the ministry ordered the files to be shredded.”
Device: extraposition as evasion (remove the agent)
→ _____

3 Original: “The company accepts that it polluted the river.”
Device: hedged factive
→ _____

Score: _____ / 14

Worksheet 2: Precision — Selection, Scope & Ambiguity

Mastery means controlling what the complement commits you to.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Study the distinctions**

Contrast	Distinction
that vs whether	'that' asserts a proposition; 'whether' leaves the polarity open
insist that he go vs goes	subjunctive = a demand; indicative = asserting a fact
know that vs know whether	factive knowledge of a fact vs knowledge of an answer
negation scope	'I don't think that he lied' ≠ 'I think that he didn't lie' (neg-raising)
that-deletion	impossible in subject clauses, after prepositions, and before 'not'

Precision cloze: complete each sentence with the ONE form whose logic and register fit exactly.

1. The tribunal insisted that the document _____ disclosed in full.
2. She insisted that she _____ nothing of the arrangement.
3. _____ he intended by the remark remains obscure.
4. The outcome hinges on _____ the clause is enforceable.
5. It is vital that no member _____ informed before the vote.
6. _____ the auditors resigned was never satisfactorily explained.
7. Nobody yet knows _____ the fund is solvent.
8. _____ she lied is not in dispute; her motive is.

PART B — **Resolve the ambiguity**

Each sentence is ambiguous. Explain the ambiguity, then rewrite it twice — once for each reading.

1. "The lawyer told the client that he had lied."
   Ambiguity: _____
   Reading A: _____
   Reading B: _____
2. "She said on Tuesday she would resign."
   Ambiguity: _____
   Reading A: _____
   Reading B: _____
3. "I don't believe that he resigned because of the scandal."
   Ambiguity: _____
   Reading A: _____
   Reading B: _____

Score: _____ / 14

Worksheet 3: Style Analysis & Rewriting

How complement clauses carry argument and concealed judgement.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A — **Analytical reading**

> *That the money had gone was not in dispute. Where it had gone, and who had authorised its going, were questions the inquiry contrived never quite to ask. It heard from officials who could not recall, and from a treasurer who declined to attend. The final report regrets that procedural weaknesses were identified. It does not say that anyone stole anything; it says that funds became unavailable. What it recommends is that procedures be reviewed. Whether they will be is another matter. That nobody has been charged is not, the report assures us, evidence that nobody should be.*

1. Identify SIX noun clauses and give the function of each.

_____

_____

_____

2. 'The final report regrets that procedural weaknesses were identified.' Analyse the factivity, the passive and the nominalisation together. Who did what?

_____

_____

3. 'It does not say that anyone stole anything; it says that funds became unavailable.' What is the rhetorical function of this pair?

_____

_____

4. 'That nobody has been charged is not … evidence that nobody should be.' Identify the structures, the ellipsis, and the effect of the fronted subject clause.

_____

_____

PART B — **Neutralise the style**

Rewrite the passage's content as three neutral sentences of factual reporting, stripping every factive, passive and nominalisation. Name an agent wherever the original conceals one. Then note in one sentence what is lost — and what is gained.

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

_____

Lost / gained: _____

Score: _____ / 16

Worksheet 4: Extended Writing — The Architecture of the Complement

Deploy the full repertoire with deliberate, controlled effect.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Class: _____

PART A **The task**

Write a persuasive, investigative or satirical passage (200–250 words) on a subject of your choosing. Requirements: at least SIX distinct noun-clause structures, of which at least ONE wh-cleft used as a verdict and ONE factive predicate used to smuggle a premise; a consistent register. Underline and label each target structure.

Self-check before submitting	✓
Six or more distinct noun-clause structures, each labelled	
At least one wh-cleft delivering a verdict	
At least one factive predicate smuggling a premise	
Mandative subjunctive used correctly, if used at all	
No ‘that’ after a preposition; no question order in a complement	
End-weight respected except where defied deliberately	

Word count: _____ Structures labelled: _____ / 6

Score: _____ / 35

ANSWER KEY & TEACHER NOTES

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Worksheet 1 – Rhetorical Devices

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
A1	‘regrets that … may have fallen short’	**Hedged factive — ‘regret’ presupposes its complement, but ‘may have’ denies it. The board performs contrition while conceding no fact; nominalisation (‘conduct’) removes the act**
A2	‘What the committee never asked …’	**Wh-cleft as verdict — fronts the omission, then delivers the damning question in end-focus**
A3	‘It was determined that the records be disposed of.’	**Extraposition as evasion + agentless passive + subjunctive — nobody determines, nobody disposes; institutional will appears without an author**
A4	‘that …, that …, that …, and that …’	**Accumulating complements under a factive (‘understood’) — each clause is presupposed true, so the indictment is built from premises the reader has already conceded**
B1	wh-cleft	**e.g. ‘What the report never says is who profited.’**
B2	extraposition as evasion	**e.g. ‘It was decided that the files be shredded.’**
B3	hedged factive	**e.g. ‘The company regrets that pollution of the river may have occurred.’**

Worksheet 2 – Precision & Ambiguity

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
A	Gaps 1–8 in order	**1 be (subjunctive: demand), 2 knew (indicative: assert a fact), 3 What, 4 whether (after a preposition), 5 be, 6 Why, 7 whether, 8 That**
B1	pronoun reference	**‘he’ may be the lawyer or the client. A: ‘The lawyer admitted to the client that he himself had lied.’ B: ‘The lawyer told the client that the client had lied.’**
B2	adverbial attachment	**‘on Tuesday’ may modify ‘said’ or ‘would resign’. A: ‘On Tuesday she said she would resign.’ B: ‘She said she would resign on Tuesday.’**
B3	negation scope	**The negation may scope over ‘resigned’ or over ‘because of the scandal’. A: ‘I believe he did not resign at all.’ B: ‘I believe he resigned, but not because of the scandal.’**

Worksheet 3 – Style Analysis

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q1	Six noun clauses + functions	**‘That the money had gone’ = subject; ‘Where it had gone’ / ‘who had authorised its going’ = subjects (of ‘were questions’); ‘that procedural weaknesses were identified’ = object of ‘regrets’; ‘that anyone stole anything’ / ‘that funds became unavailable’ = objects of ‘say’; ‘What it recommends’ = subject; ‘that procedures be reviewed’ = complement; ‘Whether they will be’ = subject; ‘That nobody has been charged’ = subject; ‘that nobody should be’ = complement of ‘evidence’**

#	Question / Item	Answer / Guidance
Q2	regrets / passive / nominalisation	**‘Regret’ is factive, so the reader must accept that weaknesses were identified. But the passive deletes the identifier, and ‘procedural weaknesses’ nominalises the wrongdoing into an abstraction. The report regrets the discovery, not the theft — and nobody did anything**
Q3	the paired complements	**The first, negated, is non-committal about theft; the second asserts an agentless nominalised process. Syntax substitutes an event without an actor for a crime with one — the denial is literal, the exculpation total**
Q4	‘That nobody has been charged …’	**A fronted subject that-clause (factive: nobody has been charged) and a complement clause after ‘evidence’, with ‘charged’ ellipted after ‘should be’. Fronting defies end-weight so that the absence of charges occupies the position of topic; the sentence then denies the inference it has just invited, and ‘the report assures us’ sits parenthetically, dripping**
B	Neutral rewrite	**e.g. ‘Funds were unaccounted for. The inquiry did not ask who authorised the payments. Its report recommends a review of procedures and names nobody.’ Lost: irony and cadence. Gained: agents, and the visibility of what the report declines to say**

Worksheet 4 – Extended Writing Rubric

Criterion	Descriptor	Marks
Structural range	Six or more distinct noun-clause structures, deliberately deployed and labelled	0–8
Advanced structures	Wh-cleft verdict + factive smuggling, both effective	0–8
Register & control	Register sustained; factivity and modality precisely judged	0–7
Accuracy	Subjunctive, word order, selection and punctuation all error-free	0–6
Effect	The passage genuinely persuades or moves; presupposition earns its place	0–6