Defining relative clauses

Defining relative clauses usually begin with a relative pronoun. These replace the noun of the main clause. Relative pronouns are *who, which, that, whose* and *whom*. The table below gives you a summary of this information.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relative pronouns for people:</th>
<th>who, whose, that, whom</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Relative pronouns for things:</td>
<td>which, that</td>
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</table>

What are defining relative clauses?
‘The book is about architecture in Thailand’. Look at the picture on the right. We don’t know which book is being described. Now read the next sentence.

‘The book **which is on the top of the pile** is about architecture in Thailand’. Now it is clear which book is being described. The underlined section of the sentence helps you to limit the number of possible books. It provides you with a description of the book that is being described. **It is a defining relative clause.** In this example, it would also be possible to say ‘The book **which has a bookmark in it** is about architecture in Thailand’.

Note that you do not need to put a comma before or after a defining relative clause.

**Activity 1: Defining relative clauses with things.** Look at the pairs of sentences below and combine them with *which* or *that* to make one sentence that contains a defining relative clause. Can you point to the item that is described in each sentence?

1. The letter is from my brother. It is on the top of the pile.
2. The pyramid contains treasure. The pyramid is on the left.
3. The tree has beautiful flowers every year. The tree is the middle of the group.
4. The tool is called a hammer. The tool is used for hitting nails.
5. The road goes to Melbourne. The man is facing the road.

**Activity 2: Defining relative clauses with people.** Work with a partner. Look at the next pairs of sentences and combine them with *who* or *that* to make one sentence that contains a defining relative clause. Can you point to the person who is described in each sentence?

1. The girl won an academic prize. The girl is on the right.
2. The man has a good voice. The man is the tallest of the group.
3. John agreed with the opinions of his colleague. The colleague was standing directly in front of the computer.
4. The ball player broke his leg during the game. The ball player had the ball in his arms.

**Activity 3: Combining sentences.** Work with a partner. Look at the next pairs of sentences and combine them with *any suitable relative pronoun* to make one sentence that contains a defining relative clause.

1. The factory has closed down. The factory is on Hutton Street.
2. The equipment in the factory has been sold. The equipment was less than 10 years old.
3. The employee used to work as a cashier. The police arrested the employee for theft.
4. The woman lives in my street. The woman’s brother was arrested by the police.
5. Last week I met a man. The man lost his job when the factory closed.
6. There was a demonstration outside the factory. The factory closed last week.
7. A fire destroyed the building. The building used to be a factory.
8. The people are looking for new jobs. The people used to work in the factory.
9. Nobody saw the person. The person started the fire in the factory.
10. The people all found new employment. Their jobs were lost when the factory closed.