

Prepositional phrases at the beginning of a clause

In sentences that *start* with a prepositional phrase (as is the case above, where prepositional phrase *In a letter to the then US President Franklin Roosevelt* starts the sentence/clause), the prepositional phrase modifies the *action* (*verb*) of the clause that follows this prepositional phrase.

It should be noted that because these prepositional phrases modify the *verb* (of the clause that follows this prepositional phrase), these prepositional phrases are *Adverbial* modifiers (remember *Adverbs* generally modify *verbs*; refer to section 2.1.5) and hence, such prepositional phrases answer the questions *how*, *when*, *where*, *how much* and *why*.

Let's again look at the following sentence:

In an Alabama prison cell, Martin Luther King drafted an impassioned defense of his use of nonviolent actions against racial discrimination.

So, in the above sentence, the prepositional phrase *in an Alabama prison cell* modifies *drafted*, the *action/verb* of the clause that follows this prepositional phrase. In this case, the prepositional phrase answers the question: *where* the defense was *drafted*: *in an Alabama prison cell*.