

**GRAMMAR LINK**

**Echo and Narcissus**

retold by Roger Lancelyn Green

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**Words That Are Often Confused**

**Who's** there?" asked the traveler.

". . . there," came the answer.

**Whose** voice is that?" the traveler wondered.

Notice that the boldface words above sound just alike when you say them aloud. However, they are spelled differently, and they serve different purposes.

*Who's* is a *contraction*, a shortened form of a pronoun and the verb *is*, *has*, or *are*. [*Who is there?*] A contraction *always* has an apostrophe.

*Whose* is a *possessive relative pronoun*. [To whom does that voice belong?] The following chart shows two other like-sounding pairs of contractions and possessive pronoun forms.

Possessive Pronoun Forms	Contractions
<p><b>Its</b> The tree sheds <i>its</i> leaves. [The leaves belong to the tree.]</p>	<p><b>It's</b> <i>It's</i> autumn. [<i>It is</i> autumn.]</p>
<p><b>Your</b> Can you see <i>your</i> reflection? [The reflection belongs to you.]</p>	<p><b>You're</b> <i>You're</i> quite conceited! [<i>You are</i> quite conceited!]</p>

If you are unsure which word is correct, try substituting the two words that make up the contraction in the sentence, such as *it is*, *who is*, or *you are*, and decide whether the sentence still makes sense.

**EXAMPLE:** Do you see *whose/who's* there?  
Do you see *who is* there?

After substituting the two words that make up the contraction, it is easier to see in the example above that *who's* is the proper choice.

**EXERCISE A Choosing Correct Words**

Circle the word in parentheses that correctly completes each sentence.

**EXAMPLE:** Echo, (*you're*, *your*) love for Narcissus is doomed.

- Narcissus, (*you're*, *your*) certainly in love with yourself!
- (*It's*, *Its*) a fine day in the mountains.
- A cloud casts (*it's*, *its*) shadow over the pool.
- Echo knows (*who's*, *whose*) lost in the woods.

5. She is a nymph (*who's, whose*) love knows no bounds.
6. Narcissus, did you ever find (*you're, your*) true love?
7. (*It's, Its*) such a pretty flower.
8. (*Who's, Whose*) repeating everything I say?
9. (*You're, Your*) going to have to accept your fate, Echo.
10. The flower tips (*it's, its*) head toward the pool of water.

**EXERCISE B Proofreading a Paragraph**

In the paragraph below, there are errors in the use of pronouns and contractions. Circle each error, and write the correct form above it. The first error is identified and corrected as an example. You should find ten more.

I think <sup>it's</sup> (its) fun to hear voices echo. You shout your message across a ravine, and your sure to hear part of it return. You hear the sound the first time when the sound waves reach you're ears by the most direct route. Then, if the sound also hits a large object like a building, it's waves bounce back, and you hear them a second time. When you hear the sound a second time, its an echo. Even though you know its just sound waves bouncing back, whose sure? At night when you're imagination runs wild and the moon hides it's face, you might wonder if it's Echo herself who's voice calls out, "Whose that?"