



GRAMMAR GROWLS WITH THE GRAMMAR OWL – WHO or WHOM



Naturally, I've called on the resident wise owl to assist me with this one. After all, whooooo better to give a hoot about whooooo and whoooooom than an owl?

The use of 'whom' isn't as common as it once was (rather like owls in the wild in that respect), but it does have its place. And no, it isn't just for times when you want to sound high-falutin' and fancy.

Remember learning about subjects and objects in English class? Some of you are, no doubt, smiling smugly, while others are saying, "Sure Beth, I remember learning about them. I just don't remember what I learned." Fair enough.

The subject in a sentence is the one who does the action of the sentence. I threw the ball to him. I am the subject. I'm doing the throwing. (Which means whoever is trying to catch the ball doesn't have a hope, because that ball went way wide of its target. 😞)

The object in a sentence is the one who has the action done to him, her or it. Him in this case.

So if someone wanted to ask which of us threw the ball, they'd be talking about the subject. Who threw the ball?

But if that someone wanted to know which of us had the ball thrown to him, they'd be talking about the object of the action. To whom was the ball thrown?

Notice another thing – if there's a preposition before it, like to or by, you use whom. You do NOT say "To who was the ball thrown?" At least I hope you don't. 😞

And as all the grammar texts and blogs say at this point, the simple way to remember it is this: if you can replace the who or whom word with him, use whom. If you'd replace the who or whom word with he, use who. The Ms stick together. Him and whom. Best buddies.

So, using the same examples as above, you wouldn't say, "Him threw the ball", you'd say, "He threw the ball". So, in that case you use who.

You wouldn't say, "Was the ball thrown to he", you'd say, "Was the ball thrown to him." So, in that case you use whom.