

# Pronouns

## Chapter 8



Rapa Nui...Easter Island

Rapa Nui, or Easter Island, located in the South Pacific, is famous for **its** giant statues called moai. These statues are an important part of the Rapanui culture, but many mysteries surround the Rapanui and **their** statues. **Everyone** who has ever studied the moai has **his or her** own theories about how and why these statues were carved, but no one knows the exact answers to these questions because so much of **their** culture has been lost. The population of Rapa Nui at **its** peak was between 6,000 - 10,000. However, by 1877, due to many factors including disease, warfare, and slavery, the population of the island had fallen to just 111. Since then the population has grown, and today, **it** is just under 4,000 people. The Rapanui have overcome many difficulties and the near loss of **their** culture. The moai statues, however, are one reminder of **their** long cultural history.

# Possessive adjectives are followed immediately by a noun.

Many mysteries surround the Rapanui  
and their statues.

poss.  
adj. + noun

Whose statues?

The Rapanui's

Use a plural generic noun to avoid problems with masculine or feminine pronouns.

Correct but complex  
Easier solution

A student has his / her / his or her own theories of why the statues were carved.  
Students have their own theories of why the statues were carved.

In formal English, use a singular pronoun to refer to an indefinite pronoun.

Everyone who has ever studied the Rapanui has his  or her own theories about how and why the statues were carved, but no one knows the answers.

**With informal English, a plural pronoun is usually used.**

**FORMAL**

Everyone who has ever studied the Rapanui has his or her own idea about why the statues were carved.

**INFORMAL**

Everyone who has ever studied the Rapanui has their own idea of why the statues were carved.

Use a singular, gender-neutral pronoun when the collective noun refers to a single impersonal unit.

The population has grown since then, and it is just under 4,000 people today.

What is the collective noun?      The population

Is it a single unit or a group?      A single unit, so use *it*.

# Practice 1

Choose the correct completions.

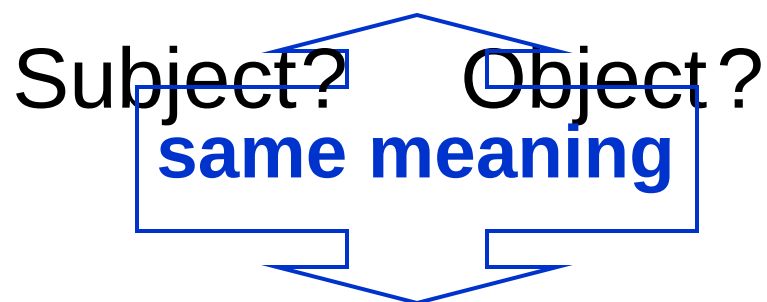
1. The huge statues are famous for *their* / *theirs* large eyes staring up into the sky.
2. Tourists often take *his or her* / *their* pictures next to the moai.
3. The population of Rapa Nui is a mix of different nationalities. *It is* / *They are* 60% Rapanui and about 40% people from other countries such as Chile.
4. Everyone has *their* / *her* theories about why the moai were carved.



Walking among the gigantic moai, **one** can't help but be filled with questions. How were **they** built and later moved? Why did **they** face away from the sea? Did the islanders believe each moai **itself** had special powers? Was each one a statue of a famous person? The answers to some of these questions are known, while **others** remain a mystery. Almost all of the moai were carved at a single site inside an extinct volcano crater. **They** were carved by hand with stone chisels, and each statue represents an important person. Transporting the massive moai required large amounts of timber. Some believe that the moai were placed on logs and rolled to **their** destinations. As more statues were made, more logs were needed, leading some scientists to speculate that the Rapanui **themselves** might have played a role in the deforestation of the island.

Use reflexive pronouns when the subject and the object of a sentence are the same person.

The Rapa Nui might have played a role themselves in the deforestation.



The Rapa Nui themselves might have played a role in the deforestation of the island.

# Use reflexive pronouns for emphasis.

Did the islanders believe each moai **itself** had special powers?



What does *itself* emphasize?

The islanders  
The mo'ai

# Use *You*, *One*, and *They* as impersonal pronouns that refer to “people in general”

Walking among the gigantic figures, **you** can't help but be filled with questions.

Who does the **you** refer to?

Someone, anyone, people in general

Walking among the gigantic figures, **one** can't help but be filled with questions.

Same meaning, but **one** is much more formal than **you**.

## Practice 2

Using the pronouns provided, create your own sentences about Rapa Nui.

1. (one) \_\_\_\_\_.

2.(themselves) \_\_\_\_\_.

3.(you) \_\_\_\_\_.

4.(itself) \_\_\_\_\_.



Fossil evidence shows that Rapa Nui used to have many different kinds of trees. However, there are now no trees on Rapa Nui. **One** theory for the lack of trees is that gradually colder temperatures killed the trees. **Another** is that the people **themselves** cut down more and more trees in order to transport and erect the growing number of moai. Still **others** point to a combination of factors from overpopulation, wars, climate change, and moai construction. Whatever the actual reason, did **anyone** stop to question the effects of their actions? As **the Rapa Nui** chopped down the last remaining trees **one after another**, did **they** ask **each other** where new trees would come from? Or did **everyone** just assume there were more trees on **the other** side of the island? The answer will never be known, but for the island of Rapa Nui hope remains. Seeds of the island's trees have been found in museums and may be reintroduced in the near future.

# Use forms of *other* as either adjectives or pronouns.

One theory is that colder weather killed all the  
(first example)

trees. Another theory is that lack of rain killed  
adjective + noun

them. Others include cutting down all the trees  
pronoun

for firewood or using the trees to transport  
moai.

# *Other* is used in many different expressions.

Separate events that occurred very close in time

They chopped down the last remaining trees  
*one after another*.

Alternative

Without trees, the Rapanui couldn't move the moai. They tried *every other* way they could think of but none worked.

Reciprocal relationship

The people helped *each other* move the moai.

## Practice 3

Complete the sentences with a form of *other*.

1. Most tourists come to Rapa Nui to see the moai.  
Others come to see the beautiful beaches.
2. Every other island I've visited has palm trees,  
but Rapa Nui does not.
3. With only 4,000 people on the island, neighbors  
have to help each other with large projects like  
building houses.
4. Scientists have found another five mo'ai  
buried under a landslide.

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