

TOPIC OF THE WEEK

Subject: WHO?

SOURCE: ChatGPT

Who? is one of the simplest questions in language and one of the deepest.

Grammatically, **who** is an **interrogative pronoun**. It asks about a person or identity:

- Who is there?
- Who wrote this?
- Who are we?

But the question changes depending on what follows it.

- **Who is that?** asks for identification.
- **Who am I?** asks about personal identity.
- **Who are we?** asks about collective identity.
- **Who should I become?** asks about possibility and aspiration.

Unlike questions such as *what* or *where*, **who** points toward persons rather than things. It asks not merely for a description, but for an identity.

And sometimes the shortest form—simply "**Who?**"—is enough to express a fundamental human curiosity:

Who is speaking?

Who is acting?

Who is responsible?

Who are we?

A single word, opening a very large door.

"Who am I?" is grammatically straightforward:

Who — interrogative pronoun
am — first-person singular form of to be
I — first-person singular pronoun

But it is also one of the oldest philosophical questions.

There are many kinds of answers:

- A name: "I am Leslie."
- A role: "I am a parent, a friend, a writer."
- A biological answer: "I am a human being, a member of Homo sapiens."
- A psychological answer: "I am a collection of memories, experiences, and habits."
- A behavioural answer: "I am what I repeatedly do."
- A spiritual answer: Some traditions say there is a deeper self beneath thoughts and roles; others deny that there is a permanent self at all.

Notice that each answer tells a different story about identity.

You have asked several related questions recently: about who, what, why, whether behaviour defines the self, and what we are part of. One thread running through them is the distinction between what we do and who we are.

There is no universally accepted answer to "Who am I?" But the question itself suggests something important: you are not merely an object in the world. You are a being capable of reflecting on yourself, questioning yourself, and shaping yourself.

The answer may not be a single statement. It may be an ongoing conversation between:

who you have been,
who you are now,
and who you are becoming.
Who are we?

"Who are we?" is the collective form of "Who am I?"

Grammatically:

Who — interrogative pronoun
are — plural form of to be
we — first-person plural pronoun

The question asks about the identity of a group. But the meaning of we can vary enormously:

- You and I.
- A family.
- A community.
- A nation.
- All human beings.

If we mean humanity, then answers might include:

- We are humans, members of the species *Homo sapiens*.
- We are social beings, dependent on one another for survival and flourishing.
- We are storytellers, creating meaning through language, culture, and memory.
- We are makers and destroyers, capable of remarkable creativity and terrible harm.
- We are question-askers, wondering who we are, what the world is, and why any of it matters.

Yet every answer captures only part of the picture.

Perhaps that is why the question remains alive. "Who are we?" is not only a request for information; it is an invitation to reflection. It asks whether there is something shared beneath our differences, something that makes a collection of individuals into a we.

One possible answer is:

We are individuals who find ourselves connected to one another, trying to understand what that connection means.

And so the question continues:

Who am I?
Who are you?
Who are we?

Each widens the circle.

Are we connected?

Yes, though the nature of that connection depends on what level you mean.

Physically

We are connected through the natural world. Every human depends on air, water, food, ecosystems, and the actions of countless other people. No one is completely self-sufficient.

Biologically

All humans belong to the same species, *Homo sapiens*, and share common ancestry. The farther back you go, the more our family trees intertwine.

Socially

Language, culture, knowledge, and institutions are collective creations. Even our most personal thoughts are shaped by words and ideas learned from others.

Emotionally

We can be affected by the joys and suffering of people we've never met. Empathy, compassion, and grief often cross great distances.

Philosophically

This is where views diverge.

- Some traditions hold that all beings are fundamentally interconnected.
- Some emphasise individual autonomy and see connection as something we build rather than something that already exists.
- Others argue both are true: we are distinct individuals, yet our lives are deeply interdependent.

Perhaps the interesting question is not whether we are connected, but how.

We are clearly separate in some ways—you are not me, and I am not you. Yet neither of us exists in isolation. Our lives are woven into networks of relationships, influences, and shared realities.

So a balanced answer might be:

We are separate individuals, but not isolated ones. We are connected, even if we disagree about the depth and meaning of that connection.

