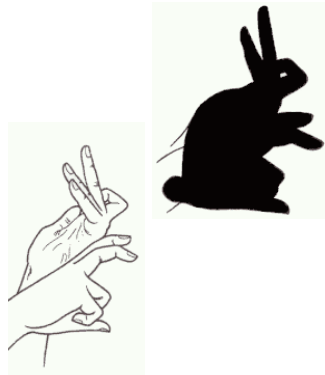


Sarah's Shadow

by
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The tall teacher pulled down a white screen that covered the whiteboard. He flicked on an overhead projector, and a large black curl appeared on the screen:



Almost at once, a hand-shadow alligator crawled in from the left side of the screen.

“Uh-uh, Sarah,” the tall teacher said, and Sarah, who sat next to the overhead, pulled her hand off the glass.

“Now class, who can name this punctuation mark?” the teacher asked.

“A comma,” two third-graders called out.

“No, pretend this mark is floating above the writing line,” said the teacher.

“A flying comma?” came a reply.

The tall teacher frowned. “No, this punctuation mark is called an apostrophe. A-pos-tro-phe.”

“A-pos-tro-phe,” the class repeated.

At this point, a hand-shadow dog appeared from the bottom of the screen. Sarah, with one hand on the glass again, spread her pinkie to make the

shadow dog open its mouth. The teacher rapped Sarah's hand with a knuckle and the dog vanished.

"Now, an apostrophe helps form a possessive," the tall teacher went on. "Pos-ses-sive."

"Pos-ses-sive," the class echoed.

"When an apostrophe comes before an s, it shows that something belongs to someone. Like this."

A second transparency appeared on the screen:

Walter's

Moments afterward, a hand-shadow rabbit hopped over the word. Sarah had formed her hand as if making the OK sign. When she wiggled her third and fourth fingers, the shadow rabbit's ears wiggled as well.

The tall teacher flipped off the overhead projector, erasing both word and rabbit. "So much for possessives *and* our shadow puppet show," he said. "Now take out your English workbooks, class, and complete page seventeen about apostrophes."

Sarah opened her desk. "Apostrophes are my favorite punctuation mark," she said. "It shows what things belong to me."

Sarah's desk was the most well-stocked desk in the classroom at the end of the hall. Dozens of pencils, three-sizes of scissors, four rulers, three kinds of glue, paper clips, pencil grips, and colored pens of every color lay in neat rows between stacks of folders and reams of notebook paper. And on every item in that desk was a sparkly sticker that said **Sarah**.

Sarah took the cap off a black felt pen. "Sarah apostrophe S is better," she said, adding 's to each sticker. "What's mine is mine."

Myra leaned over towards Sarah's desk. She pointed to the thick notebook labeled **Sarah's Binder**. "Psst. Can I borrow a sheet of paper?"

"What do you think I am, a library?" said Sarah. "I have just enough paper for me."

"Sarah, I need a tissue," said Kimberly, who held a hand over her nose.

Sarah touched a tall box marked **Sarah's Kleenex**. "Sorry, I have none to spare."

Next Matthew, who sat behind Sarah, asked, "Do you have a Jungle Green crayon?"

Sarah picked up her carton of **Sarah's 120 Crayons**. "Nope. I keep all my crayons in alphabetical order, and I don't want them messed up."

Indeed Sarah had many things in her desk. But, as her classmates were learning, she hated to share them. The boxes of erasers, packs of note cards, and bundles of felt pens were off limits to anyone but her. Even at recess, although Sarah had two new jump ropes, she never let anyone touch the spare. During free time, no one could read the extra paperbacks in her backpack, and at lunch she'd throw away leftover fish crackers and raisins rather than offering them to others.

"Sarah apostrophe S," she said, writing the final 's inside her desk. "What's mine is only for me."

Sarah took out her **Sarah's Workbook**, a **Sarah's Pencil**, and a **Sarah's Eraser**. With her **Sarah's Sharpener** she put a point on the pencil and leaning on **Sarah's Notebook** began to work.

Meanwhile, in front of the classroom, the white screen remained down. After filling in the first workbook blank, Sarah happened to look up. On the screen something caught her eye. It appeared for only a second, but she was certain what it was, her hand-shadow rabbit.

"That's funny," she said, checking the projector next to her. "The overhead is off, and the glass is bare."

When Sarah finished her workbook work, she opened her desk to take out **Sarah's Drawing Pad**. There it was again. Sarah's hand-shadow rabbit, its finger ears wiggling, was hopping across the inside of her desktop.

"It's one of those tricks of the eye," she told herself. "Like the white spots you see after someone takes your picture."

As she spoke, the hand shadow began to flicker. It flowed off her desk, across the floor, past her classmate's feet, and under the coat closet door.

"Nope. That's no eye trick," Sarah said. "That's my hand shadow, and somehow it can move around this room without me."

Not until recess time could Sarah enter the closet and look for the shadow rabbit. She found it flickering on the wall above the hook where her backpack hung. Next to the hand shadow were three words printed in black: **Sarah's Hook**.

"Hey, shadow rabbit, did you write that?" asked Sarah. "I knew my shadow could follow me to school and skip rope with me on the playground. But I never knew it could write possessives. Sarah apostrophe S. Thank you very much. I hate sharing a hook."

The hand shadow flickered again. Sliding along the wall, it flowed out of the coat closet and into the empty classroom. Sarah followed it. While

passing the sink, she saw more new writing. **Sarah's Sponge** was on a sponge. **Sarah's Soap** circled the soap bottle, and **Sarah's Towels** crossed the paper towel dispenser.

"Thanks again, shadow rabbit," said Sarah. "As the teacher said, the possessives show that those things belong to me!"

Sarah watched her hand shadow hop around the classroom walls. Everywhere it stopped more black writing appeared. A corner of the bulletin board read **Sarah's Corner**. A pillow on the reading corner rug read **Sarah's Pillow**, and a bookshelf said **Sarah's Shelf**.

"Mine, mine, mine!" she said, pointing to each item. "Shadow rabbit, could I have my own chair at the reading table, too? A red one please. I hate sharing chairs."

Instantly **Sarah's Chair** appeared on a red seatback.

"And mine," she said, following her hand shadow out into the hall.

As the dark rabbit hopped along the hallway walls, **Sarah's Fountain**, **Sarah's Bulletin Board**, and **Sarah's Fire Extinguisher** appeared on each object.

"Mine! Mine! Mine!" Sarah called out.

When her hand shadow reached the playground door, it zipped outside.

"Hey, wait for me!" said Sarah.

On the playground, she felt in the best possible mood.

"Mine!" she shouted when **Sarah's Wall** appeared on a kickball wall.

"Mine!" she said, as a **Sarah's Shade** sign popped up on her favorite shady spot under the oak tree.

"Mine! Mine!" she sang out, racing past **Sarah's Swing** and **Sarah's Bike Rack**.

The rest of the W.T. Melon students stared at Sarah in bewilderment.

"Sarah, can I borrow a Hula-Hoop?" said Tanya, standing by rack with **Sarah's Hula-Hoops** printed on it.

"Read the sign, those are mine," said Sarah.

"Sarah, can we use your four-square court?" asked Alex, straddling a white asphalt line labeled **Sarah's Four-Square Court**.

"Sorry no trespassing on my property."

When the Playground Lady blew her silver whistle to end recess, the third-graders lined up at the door. Now a sign above the doorway read **Sarah's Entrance**.

“Sarah, can your class go in through your door,” the Playground Lady asked.

“Nope, that door is for the private use of me and my shadow,” Sarah said, strutting through the doorway alone.

In the hallway, Sarah watched her hand-shadow rabbit add more possessives. **Sarah’s Office** appeared on the former school office door. **Sarah’s Lounge** replaced the Teachers’ Lounge, and the previous Girls’ Room became **Sarah’s Restroom**.

Yet, although Sarah was thrilled to see her name on everything, something was wrong. As she stepped down **Sarah’s Hallway**, she said to the flickering shadow on the wall, “Funny, the hallway seems so empty. I never thought I could be lonely in the hall.”

Peeking into **Sarah’s Lunchroom**, Sarah saw **Sarah’s Table**, **Sarah’s Trays**, **Sarah’s Silverwares**, **Sarah’s Napkins**, **Sarah’s Milk**, and **Sarah’s Spaghetti**.

“Maybe you’re getting a little out of hand, shady rabbit,” Sarah said. “Where’s everyone else going to eat?”

Sarah followed her hand shadow down the hall, past the empty **Sarah’s Gym** and vacant **Sarah’s Library**, to the classroom at the end of the hall. A sign on the door read:

Sarah’s Classroom.

Sarah walked in and flipped on a **Sarah’s Light Switch**.

“Sarah apostrophe S,” she muttered, reading the words scribbled around the classroom like graffiti.

Sarah’s Pencil Sharpener

Sarah’s Reading Table

Sarah’s Art Cupboard

Sarah’s Calendar

Sarah’s Clock

Sarah’s Rug

Sarah sat down in **Sarah’s Desk** and stared out **Sarah’s Window**. She saw her class sitting on the far end of the soccer field, the only spot that didn’t say **Sarah’s Baseball Field**, **Sarah’s Basketball Court**, **Sarah’s Climbing Structure**, or **Sarah’s Something**.

The tall teacher entered the classroom. Around his neck hung a cardboard sign that said **Sarah’s Teacher**.

“Now, Sarah, take out a piece of **Sarah’s Paper** and a **Sarah’s Pencil**, and get ready for the next **Sarah’s Assignment**,” he said.

“But shouldn’t we wait for the rest of the class?” Sarah asked.

Sarah’s Teacher’s swept a hand around the classroom. “Those possessives prove that you possess all the possessions in here, Sarah,” he said. “And your class knows how you hate sharing them.”

For the next hour Sarah worked in her **Sarah’s Math Book**. As her hand shadow wrote **Sarah’s Lights**, **Sarah’s Floor**, and **Sarah’s Ceiling** around the room, she looked longingly out **Sarah’s Window**. How she missed her classmates. She missed their clatter and chatter. She even missed hearing them ask her for things.

“It’s funny, shadow rabbit,” Sarah called out. “I hate sharing my stuff, but I hate even more not having anyone to share my stuff with.”

“Time for **Sarah’s Music**,” announced **Sarah’s Teacher**. “And I know **Sarah’s Music Instructor** has prepared a special **Sarah’s Lesson** just for Sarah. So take out your **Sarah’s recorder** and head down to **Sarah’s Music Room**.”

“And I’m also beginning to hate the word *Sarah’s*,” Sarah muttered.

Sarah’s Teacher exited **Sarah’s Classroom**, but Sarah remained in **Sarah’s Chair**. Opening **Sarah’s Desk**, she took out her largest **Sarah’s Eraser**. She leaned over and erased **Sarah’s Overhead** from the side of the projector. At once the shadow rabbit hopped up and rewrote it.

“Sorry, shadow,” Sarah said, flipping on the overhead. “No more Sarah apostrophe S’s. You’re OK company, but I prefer my regular friends. Now I know that to keep them around, I should keep from saying *mine*.”

Sarah placed her hand on the overhead glass and made the OK sign. The hand shadow rabbit appeared on the white screen. Wiggling her fingers, Sarah opened her hand, and the dark rabbit turned to black handprint. She moved her hand back and forth and the shadow hand waved good-bye.

Next, Sarah rose from her desk with her eraser. She raced around the room erasing all the possessives. Away went **Sarah’s Rug**, **Sarah’s Science Shelf**, **Sarah’s Wall Plug**, and **Sarah’s Dictionary**. After the classroom words were gone, she hurried out to the hall and removed the writing out there. She did the same in the gym, library, and lunchroom. Finally she ran out the playground door and rubbed out **Sarah’s Entrance**.

By the time the third-graders came filing back into the classroom at the end of the hall, Sarah was sitting in her seat, peeling off the sparkly stickers from inside her desk.

The tall teacher entered the room no longer wearing Sarah's name. "All right class, let's continue our lesson about apostrophes from this morning," he said. "Besides possessives, apostrophes are also used to form contractions. In a contraction, two words *share* letters to make one word."

During the lesson, Matthew leaned toward Sarah. "Can I borrow a Lemon-Yellow crayon?" he asked.

Sarah took out her crayon carton. "Sure, all my stuff is up for grabs." But before handing over the entire box, she added, "Just one thing, Matthew. My crayons are arranged in alphabetical order. So please don't mess that up."