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whence  (wĕns, hwĕns)

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adv.

1. From where; from what place: *Whence came this traveler?*

2. From what origin or source: *Whence comes this splendid feast?*

conj.

1. Out of which place; from or out of which.

2. By reason of which; from which: *The dog was coal black from nose to tail, whence the name Shadow.*

[Middle English *whennes* : *whenne*, whence (from Old English *hwanon*; see **k^{wo}**- [in the Appendix of Indo-European roots](#)) + *-es*, genitive sing. suff.; see [-s³](#).]

Usage Note: The construction *from whence* has been criticized as redundant since the 1700s. It is true that *whence* incorporates the sense of *from*: *a remote village, whence little news reached the wider world*. But *from whence* has been used steadily by reputable writers since the 1300s, among them Shakespeare, John Milton, Jane Austen, and the translators of the King James Bible: *"I will lift up mine eyes unto the hills, from whence cometh my help"* (Psalms). Such a respectable precedent makes it difficult to label the construction, which is fairly rare and very formal in any case, as incorrect.

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Indo-European & Semitic Roots Appendices

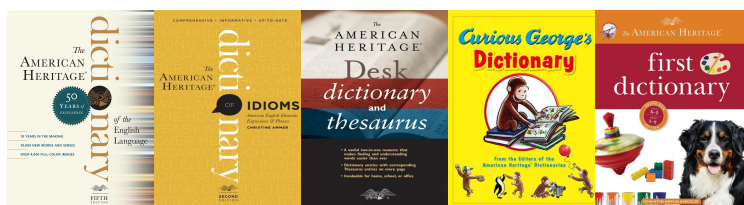
Thousands of entries in the dictionary include etymologies that trace their origins back to reconstructed proto-languages. You can obtain more information about these forms in our online appendices:

[Indo-European Roots](#)

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The Indo-European appendix covers nearly half of the Indo-European roots that have left their mark on English words. A more complete treatment of Indo-European roots and the English words derived from them is available in our [Dictionary of Indo-European Roots](#).

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