

*A high school gym set up for a spelling bee. A few rows of bleachers or chairs are set up for the spellers; across from them is a desk for the host and word pronouncer. Front and center, the lone looming microphone, at which the contestants will attempt to spell as yet unknown words.*

*RONA LISA PERETTI, long time local hostess of the bee enters and makes sure all is in order. While adjusting the microphone RONA flashes back to the moment when she herself stood here as a contestant—and spelled her winning word.*

VOICE

*Miss Peretti. Please spell “Syzygy.”*

RONA

*Syzygy.  
S-Y-Z-Y-G-Y  
Syzygy!*

VOICE

*We have a winner!*

RONA

*Thank you.  
Thank you.  
Thank you. (hugs trophy) (MUSIC CUE)*

*CHIP’s entrance jars Rona from her memory. Last year’s champion, he is first to arrive. As spellers arrive each checks in with RONA and receives a placard with a number.*

CHIP

*AT THE 25TH ANNUAL  
PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE  
MY PARENTS KEEP ON TELLING ME  
JUST BEING HERE IS WINNING.  
ALTHOUGH  
I KNOW IT ISN’T SO.*

*(He does know this; he did poorly last year at Nationals)*

RONA

*BUT IT’S A VERY NICE  
VERY VERY NICE...*

RONA, CHIP

*VERY VERY NICE  
VERY NICE BEGINNING.*

RONA

Our winner here last year: Chip Tolentino. Let's give him a hand!

*SCHWARZY enters, eager, excited, wound-up, already nearly breathless.*

SCHWARZY

Ms. Peretti!

RONA

And, our youngest competitor, Logainne SchwarzandGrubeniére,

*Schwarzy and Chip check each other out competitively. Coneybear runs in.*

CONEYBEAR

AT THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING GAME (Bee!)  
I'LL STAND WHEN THEY ANNOUNCE MY NAME:

RONA

Leaf Coneybear.

CONEYBEAR

AND TRY TO KEEP FROM SHAKING.

SCHWARZY

ALAS  
HIS SHAKING WILL NOT PASS

CONEYBEAR, CHIP, RONA AND SCHWARZY  
'CAUSE IT'S A VERY BIG  
VERY FRAUGHT-  
SIMPLE BUT IT'S NOT-  
IT'S A VERY BIG UNDERTAKING.

*Barfee enters, stumblingly*

RONA

*(with some surprise and admiration)*

Returning after last season's tragic setback: William Barfee.

BARFEE

It's pronounced Barfée; there's an accent ague.

*Marcy enters. She's calm, you might even mistakenly think blasé.*

RONA

I'm not sure who this girl is-

MARCY

Marcy Park.

SCHWARZY

WINNER'S DESTINATION: WASHINGTON, D.C.

CHIP/SCHWARZY

PLASMA TV  
IN A FANCY HOTEL.

MARCY/CHIP/SCHWARZY

WHERE THEY TREAT YOU WELL.

ALL SPELLERS

ALL BECAUSE YOU LOVE TO SPELL.  
WE SPELL.

RONA

IT'S A MARVELOUS MEMORY  
IF YOU WIN THE SPELLING BEE.  
ONE'S LIFE IMPROVES FROM A TO Z  
THE MINUTE YOU ARE CROWNED HERE.  
I SEE  
A TROPHY HELD BY ME!  
AND WHEN I WON  
DID I SWELL—  
OH THE STORIES I COULD TELL—  
BUT BRAGGARTS WON'T DO WELL  
AROUND HERE.

*OLIVE enters. It's her first time at county level competition and she's not sure what to do. She sees Barfee standing alone doing what looks like some foot exercise. She approaches.*

OLIVE

Hi- do you know where I check in?

BARFEE

(with hostility)

Excuse me, I've marked this area off with invisible tape

CONEYBEAR  
AT THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
WE'VE MEMORIZED THE MANUAL...

ALL SPELLERS  
ABOUT HOW TO SPELL THESE WORDS.  
WORDS THAT REQUIRE THOUGHT.  
PEOPLE THINK WE'RE AUTOMATONS.  
BUT THAT IS EXACTLY WHAT WE'RE NOT.

MARCY  
WE HEAR THE WORD,

SCHWARZY  
WE BREATHE,

CONEYBEAR  
WE WAIT.

ALL SPELLERS  
UNLIKE IDIOTS WE IDEATE.

RONA  
*(helpfully, in announcer mode)*  
To ideate is to form an image or idea, to think

CONEYBEAR  
AT THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

SCHWARZY  
WE FEEL NO ANIMOSITY

SCHWARZY/OLIVE  
AND YET OUR HEADS ARE SPINNING.

BARFEE  
WE ARE  
THE SLIGHTEST BIT BIZARRE

MARCY  
BUT SINCE THE TIME IS NOW

CONEYBEAR  
HOLY COW

SCHWARZY  
WE SHALL TAKE A SOLEMN VOW  
TO CONCENTRATE ON WINNING.

ALL  
WE CONCENTRATE ON WINNING.  
AT THE TWENTY FIFTH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE  
WE SPEAK SO DAMN CONVINCINGLY.

RONA  
THEY'RE NERVOUS BUT THEY'RE GRINNING.

GIRLS (OLIVE/MARCY/SCHWARZY)  
IT SEEMS  
WE'RE LIVING OUT OUR DREAMS  
*SCHWARZY translates above in sign language*

BOYS  
WHICH IS A VERY NICE  
VERY NICE, VERY VERY VERY NICE

ALL  
VERY NICE, VERY NICE  
VERY VERY VERY NICE  
VERY NICE  
BEGINNING .

RONA  
TWENTY FIFTH ANNUAL

KIDS  
TWENTY FIFTH ANNUAL

ALL  
PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

RONA  
*(ad-libbed along these lines,  
Instructions on where to meet Rona vary by theater configuration)*

Well hello and welcome. I'd like to take this moment to ask you to please turn off all cell phones and other distracting devices, and put away cameras—sorry, no photos at the bee. Now it seems there are a few spellers who haven't checked in, so if I call your name please [come right around this horseshoe and meet me over here by the desk]. I'm missing –

*Rona calls names of four audience volunteers (selected through interview process before the show)*

[volunteer one, volunteer two, volunteer three, volunteer four]

And I need to speak with Miss Olive Ostrovsky.

*Olive crosses to Rona as the volunteers are coming on stage.*

OLIVE

I'm Olive.

RONA (pulls her gently aside)

Miss Ostrovsky. It seems we haven't received your entrance fee.

OLIVE

Entrance fee?

RONA

Did the school not tell you about the twenty-five dollar entrance fee- ?  
Is your mom here maybe? Or your dad?

OLIVE

My dad had to go into work. He's gonna try to come later.

RONA

Who brought you to the bee, dear?

OLIVE

The bus. *(line sometimes changed to work in local transportation reference; eg, BART in San Francisco)*

RONA

All right. We'll talk about the entrance fee later. Take your seat. *(indicates that she should sit back down)*

CHIP

*(to the "new girl," taking her under his wing)*

Hey, Marcy? Don't be nervous. Just watch what I do

.

MARCY

Don't worry, I'm not nervous.

SCHWARZY

(to Coneybear)

Have you ever been in an *underground* gymnasium before? (Line can change depending on the theater – eg: *Have you ever been in a gymnasium with chandeliers before?*)

CONEYBEAR

(delighted at all that's new to him today)

I've never been in a gymnasium before!

OLIVE

(to Barfee)

What school do you go to?

BARFEE

Shut up.

RONA

[*Ad-libs as spellers get seated "Take your seats, please. Put your things away"*]

Ladies and Gentleman, all the children you see on stage are here because of their extraordinary ability and love of language—but only one of them can go on to compete in the National Spelling bee! And this year, to celebrate our silver anniversary, our local sponsors, the Putnam Optometrists, are offering today's winner a two hundred dollar savings bond toward his or her future education.

*Kids respond*

RONA

But remember, to get here each child had to win—

CONEYBEAR

Oh but I -

RONA

or place-- in their own district bee- so each of them is *already* a winner.

BARFEE

(may have echolalia problem)

Already a winner

RONA

Hello, I'm Rona Lisa Peretti, and I'm pleased to be back for my 9<sup>th</sup> consecutive year as your host. Unfortunately, our usual word pronouncer, Superintendent Spriggs has fallen ill, so please join me in welcoming back Vice Principal Douglas Panch from Lake Hemingway-Dos Passos Junior High. Vice Principal Panch is returning to us after a five-year hiatus - so thank you Douglas for stepping in on such short notice.

*VICE PRINCIPAL PANCH enters.*

PANCH

Thank you Rona, and I would like to say as to the incident 5 years ago, I'm in a much better place now. It's amazing what a change of diet can do for a man. Thank you.

RONA

Wonderful.

PANCH

*(has always been a bit smitten by Rona)*

And may I add, Ms. Peretti here is not only one of Putnam County's top realtors, she's also a former spelling champion herself.

RONA

Third annual.

PANCH

"Syzygy."

RONA

"Syzygy. When the earth aligns with the moon and the sun."

PANCH

Beautiful. And now for the Pledge of Allegiance led by our comfort counselor, *(checks writing on the palm of his hand)* Mr. Mitchell M. Mahoney

*MITCH MAHONEY, the COMFORT COUNSELOR, enters. He looks like he could be a bouncer at a gritty bar.*

RONA

Mr. Mahoney is doing his community service work with us here today.

*MITCH leads pledge of Allegiance.*

*Everyone speeds up as they say the pledge, trying to not be the last one speaking.*

*When everybody else has finished, Panch is the only one speaking, somewhere in the middle of the Pledge.*

PANCH

Spellers, be seated. Thank you, Mitch.

RONA

And now for the official spelling bee rules. *(MUSIC CUE)*

A SPELLER



A SPELLER	SPELLERS
MAY ASK QUESTIONS	PANCH
MAY ASK QUESTIONS	SPELLERS
ABOUT THE WORD'S PRONUNCIATION OR DEFINITION,	PANCH
DEFINITION	SPELLERS
USE IN A SENTENCE,	PANCH
IN A SENTENCE	SPELLERS
AND LANGUAGE OF ORIGIN	PANCH
LANGUAGE OF ORIGIN.	SPELLERS
IF YOU START TO SPELL A WORD YOU MAY START OVER,	PANCH
BUT THE SEQUENCES OF LETTERS ALREADY SPOKEN MAY NOT BE CHANGED.	PANCH & IMPATIENT SPELLERS
IF YOU MISSPELL A WORD	RONA
MISSPELL A WORD	SPELLERS
WE WILL RING	RONA

YOU WILL RING SPELLERS

THE BELL RONA

*(rings bell)* PANCH

AND THE COMFORT COUNS'LOR RONA

Mitch Mahoney MITCH

MITCH MAHONEY ALL

WILL ESCORT YOU OFF STAGE! RONA

So, is that understood spellers? PANCH

YES SPELLERS

RONA  
BEFORE ANYONE IS DISQUALIFIED  
AND BEFORE PROCEEDINGS TURN SNIDE  
AND CONTESTANTS TURN NASTY,  
I SOBERLY CONFIDE:

IN THE MOMENT BEFORE THE BEE  
CLAIMS ITS FIRST CATASTROPHE,  
I LOVE WHAT I SEE:  
KIDS ACTING INNOCENTLY.  
IT'S MY FAVORITE MOMENT OF THE BEE.  
RONA'S FAVORITE MOMENT OF THE BEE.

Then, without further ado, let the spelling begin.  
With: Miss Schwartzandgrubenierre. PANCH

*Schwarzy approaches microphone down center. As each speller makes their way to microphone Rona provides “color commentary,” facts about the speller purportedly from the their registration forms.*

RONA

Miss Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre is head of the Gay-Straight Alliance at her elementary school.

PANCH

STRABISMUS

SCHWARZY

Strabismus. May I please have the definition of that word?

PANCH

The inability of one eye to obtain binocular vision with the other because of an imbalance of the muscles of the eyeball.

SCHWARZY

And use in a sentence please?

PANCH

In the schoolyard Billy protested that he wasn't cockeyed. "I suffer from strabismus," he said, whereupon the bullies beat him harder.

*as Panch looks to Rona for approval, Schwarzy is writing the word on her arm*

RONA

Notice how she writes on her forearm. This is her way to see the word before she speaks it out loud.

SCHWARZY

Strabismus. S-T-R-A-B-I-S-M-U-S. Strabismus.

PANCH

That is correct.  
Mr. Coneybear

RONA

Mr. Coneybear was second runner up in the Putnam Basin district

*...Phone rings. A flashback to the moment when he found out he's in*

SCHWARZY as LEAF's MOM

*Brook, will you tell Leaf he has a phone call, please?*

MARCY as LEAF'S SISTER

*Leaf! Phone!*

CONEYBEAR

*Thanks! I got it!*

Hello, Leaf speaking. Uh, huh. Uh, huh. Uh, huh.

You're kidding? I'm gonna represent the Basin in the bee? Wow, I can't believe it.

*As he calls his family members, kids rise taking on these roles—audience volunteer spellers are also pulled up to be “Paul” and other siblings. One audience volunteer is left seated, when they rise they're told to sit back down again.*

CONEYBEAR

Mom, Dad, Marigold, Brook, Pinecone, Raisin, Landscape, Paul, - you're not going to believe this!

BARFEE as DAD: What's up Leaf?

LEAF: I made the county finals in the spelling bee!

*family laughs*

SCHWARZY AS MOM: Oh sweetheart, no, you came in third honey

LEAF: I know! but they just called and said the person who came in first has to go to their bat mitzvah, and the person who came in second... has to attend the bat mitzvah, so they want me to do it!

SCHWARZY AS MOM: You understand the other kids will have all won their district bees?

*family laughs*

LEAF: Yeah but well but

PANCH

*(calling Leaf's attention back)*

Capbara

CONEYBEAR

What?

PANCH

Your word is Capybara.

CONEYBEAR

Is that a word?

PANCH

That's a word, yes.

CONEYBEAR

No way- what does it mean?

PANCH

“a tailless largely aquatic South American rodent often exceeding four feet in length”

CONEYBEAR

Awesome. What else can I ask?

PANCH

You're allowed to ask for the word's language of origin or to have the word used in a sentence...

CONEYBEAR

Oh- can you use it in a sentence?

PANCH

Yes. “Don't look now Pedro but I think that tailless, largely aquatic four-and a half foot rodent swimming next to you may be a *capybara*.”

CONEYBEAR

Wow, that didn't help at all!

PANCH

Are you ready to spell the word Mr. Coneybear?

CONEYBEAR

No, but it was fun to come here-  
*(to family in aud)* hi guys-my whole family's here which is really...  
*(trance suddenly takes him)* C-A-P-Y-B-A-R-A Capybara.

PANCH

That is correct.

CONEYBEAR

It is?  
I can't believe it.

PANCH

Miss Ostrovsky

CONEYBEAR

It's unbelievable, I just said the first letters that came into my head, and that "y" was really...

ALL

Shhh.

RONA

Miss Ostrovsky came in second in her school's Halloween contest

OLIVE

I was road-kill.

PANCH

BOANTHROPY

OLIVE

*(turning toward him so he can hear her pronunciation)*

Boanthropy? May I have a definition?

PANCH

The delusion that one has become an ox.

OLIVE

*(seeing someone taking chair she saved)*

Oh, excuse me – ma'am/sir could you not sit in that seat – *(MUSIC CUE)*

OLIVE

I SAVED A CHAIR FOR MY DAD  
IN THE EIGHTH ROW, ON THE AISLE;  
AND IT MAY TAKE HIM A WHILE  
BUT WHEN HE GETS HERE, THAT'S HIS CHAIR.

'CAUSE MY MOTHER'S IN AN ASHRAM IN INDIA.  
I SAVED A CHAIR FOR HER TOO

BUT IT'S MERELY SYMBOLIC  
AS DAILY SHE CLEANSSES HERSELF IN THE GANGES.

AND I LIVE IN A HOUSE  
WHERE THERE'S AN OVERSIZED DICTIONARY  
THAT I READ  
AS A GIRL  
ON THE TOILET.

PANCH  
*(calling her back to spelling reality)*

Boanthropy

OLIVE  
Is that from the Latin root *bo* meaning ox, and the Greek root *anthro* meaning man?

PANCH  
*(has no idea)*

Sure.

OLIVE  
I LOVE MY DICTIONARY  
AND I LOVE THE INDENTED BORDER.  
EVERY WORD'S IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER  
ERGO LOST THINGS ALWAYS CAN BE FOUND.

AND I WRAP MY HEAD AROUND  
THE FACT THAT IN ONE BOOK  
IS THE ENTIRE LANGUAGE OF OUR SPECIES—  
WHICH IS A FAVORITE TERM OF NIETZCHE'S  
WHO IS THE GREAT GRANDFATHER OF CHRISTINA RICCI'S.  
YES I JOKE, BUT THE WORDS IN THE DICTIONARY  
ARE THE FRIENDS THAT I'LL HAVE FOREVER  
MORE THAN THE FRIENDS I HAVE MADE IN SCHOOL

“Boanthropy” *(speaks spelling into her hand)*

CHIP AND CONEYBEAR  
SHE'S SUCH A LOVELY GIRL,  
WITH A LOVELY LITTLE VOICE.

SCHWARZY  
AND I'VE HEARD THAT SHE'S PRO-CHOICE,  
THOUGH STILL A VIRGIN.

RONA  
AND SHE TALKS INTO HER HAND,  
AN OFTEN-USED TECHNIQUE.

OLIVE  
WHAT YOU DO NOT UNDERSTAND  
IS ONCE I SAY IT THEN I'VE SAID IT

RONA  
AND SO MUCH TO HER CREDIT  
SHE TALKS INTO HER HAND AND TURNS ASIDE

OLIVE  
SO I WILL NOT MAKE A MISTAKE AND BE DISQUALIFIED

OLIVE  
Boanthropy, B-o-a-n-t-h-r-o-p-y, Boanthropy

PANCH  
That is correct!

OLIVE/RONA  
MY (HER) FRIEND THE DICTIONARY  
IS A VERY RELIABLE FRIEND

OLIVE/RONA/SPELLERS  
doo doo doo doo doo doo (etc)  
bah dah dah dah dah dah dah

*PANCH calls Audience Volunteer #1*

FOR AUDIENCE VOLUNTEERS FULL INSTRUCTIONS

**SEE PANCH APPENDIX- AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER WORDS**

**AND RONA APPENDIX- COMMENTS ABOUT AUDIENCE VOLUNTEERS**

*The actors who originated these roles have compiled the definitive instructions; in each production the new actors also add their own ideas and ad libs.*

*Rona's introductory comments often use observable facts about the volunteer—what they're wearing, who they look like, or something about their name to make fresh jokes each performance Ad-libbed by actors playing roles of RONA and PANCH each night,*



*based on guidelines that have developed over many shows. Their list also includes standbys that are not type-specific.*

#### *AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER ONE*

*Rona comments: eg: for a woman with very high heeled shoes, Miss X believes in the old adage, the higher the heels, the better the speller. These comments rotate at discretion of actor playing RONA*

*The audience volunteer is then given a word to spell. Audience volunteers have been coached before the performance, and told to a) not act, and b) no matter what ask for definition of word and use of word in a sentence*

*Specific words rotate from list at discretion of actor playing PANCH (except when set cues).*

*The first audience volunteer is given a word we do expect them to spell correctly. Often “Jihad.” The ideal word is one that the speller will get right but still seem smart in doing so. After definition and sentence given, volunteer generally gets this right and is applauded by cast and audience.*

#### PANCH

*Calls audience volunteer #2*

#### *AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER TWO*

*Rona comment, chosen at Rona’s discretion, eg, Mr. Y is a prematurely gray ten year old*

*The second volunteer is given a word we expect them to get wrong. (Eg: Pakapoo, Chinese lottery). However, if first audience volunteer has been eliminated, second volunteer is given an easy word, eg, indigent, to try to ensure that three audience volunteers remain.*

*Whenever first audience volunteer gets out, the bell rings and company sings “Goodbye” variation #1*

#### SPELLERS

GOODBYE, YOU WERE GOOD BUT NOT GOOD ENOUGH  
SO PLEASE DON’T ASK WHY  
SIMPLY SAY GOODBYE

*variations on Goodbyes follow all audience members’ exits*

#### PANCH

Mr. Barfee

BARFEE

--It's Barfée--

RONA

Mr. Barfee has a rare mucus membrane disorder

PANCH

LUGUBRIOUS

BARFEE

Yes, of course. Lugubrious, meaning extremely sad and droopy?

PANCH

More or less, yes.

BARFEE

A topic I am all too familiar with. One moment please.

RONA

Okay watch this technique – He calls it the Magic Foot, and he's the only one I've ever seen use it. He spells it out on the floor so he can get a visual and then speaks it out loud. Incredible

BARFEE

*Lugubrious.*

*L-U-G-U – Lugu!*

*B-R-I-O-U-S –Lugubrious.*

PANCH

That is correct.

BARFEE

I know.

PANCH

*[Calls Audience volunteer 3]*

RONA

*(Rona comment, eg for bald person)* Mr. Z is recovering from headlice

PANCH

*(to aud volunteer –set slot in that it must be easy word)*

eg: Mexican.

CHIP, BARFEE & SCHWARZY

Mexican!

CHIP

That's so easy!

PANCH

Only the speller at the microphone may repeat the word. *(to aud volunteer)* Mexican.

*Definition: A resident of Mexico. Or an American slang term for anybody from Puerto Rico, The Dominican Republic, South America or Spain*  
*Sentence eg: Potato Chips: The Mexican lettuce.*

*There is some ad-libbed grumbling when (we hope) volunteer gets it right*

PANCH

Miss Park.

RONA

Marcy Park is new to our County, having placed ninth in Nationals last year, as a representative of Virginia.

*Kids (ad-libbed) ooh – Nationals! Top ten... (they didn't know that- a serious contender)*  
*Coneybear: Beautiful country.*

PANCH

Miss Park the word is *Phylactery*

MARCY

Phylactery. Am I pronouncing that correctly?

PANCH

Yes.

MARCY

Thank you. May I have the definition, please.

PANCH

“either of two small square leather boxes containing religious texts traditionally worn on the left arm and head by Jewish men during morning weekday prayers.”

MARCY

Thank you. May I have a sentence, please?

PANCH

“Billy, put down that phylactery- we're Episcopalian.”

MARCY

Thank you. Phylactery. P-H-Y-L-A-C-T-E-R-Y. Phylactery.

PANCH

That is correct. Mr. Tolentino

RONA

Slam-dunk from Park

CHIP

(to Marcy as they cross)

Hey- you were at nationals? Remember me?

MARCY

I only remember the top ten.

RONA

Charlito “Chip” Tolentino is a little league pitcher with a wicked 22-mile an hour screwball.

PANCH

Omphaloskepsis.

CHIP

*(referring to appropriate audience volunteer,  
actor playing Chip echoes comment made by Rona)*

Wait a second, didn't [the guy with the head lice] just get Mexican?

PANCH

Yes, and you got: Omphaloskepsis

CHIP

But are those rated at the same level of difficulty?

PANCH

They're both level one words, yes

CHIP

Omphaloskepsis.

PANCH

Yes.

CHIP

Can that also be pronounced “omPHAlOskepsis”?

PANCH

It can. It would be wrong.

CHIP

Omphaloskepsis. O...M...P...H...A...L-O-S-K-E-P-S-I-S. Omphaloskepsis.

PANCH

That is correct.

RONA

He rallies and nails it. That’s what it means to be champion.

*PANCH calls AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER #4. Ridiculously easy word: MUSICAL CUE.*

PANCH

Cow. (*MUSIC CUE*)

CHIP

Come on!

*SPELLERS all react to the easy word*

PANCH

Only the speller at the microphone is allowed to speak

*Properly coached volunteer goes on to ask for sentence and definition.*

*definition:* It means a cow

*sentence:* Please spell cow.

*In the unlikely (and unfortunate) event that “cow” is misspelled, a version of the “Goodbye” would be sung, and then Chip would go right into “Pandemonium”*

CHIP

MY OH MY

OLIVE, CHIP

THAT WORD’S SO MORONIC.

SCHWARZY  
I COULD CRY;  
I WANT WORDS AS LAME!

PANCH: Mr. Coneybear

CONEYBEAR  
SEMPER FI.  
I FEEL SUPERSONIC.

PANCH: Spell "gerbil"

*Coneybear spells "gerbil."*

MARCY  
THAT IS WHY I DESPISE THIS GAME.

PANCH: That is correct. Mr. Tolentino.

CHIP & CONEYBEAR  
LIFE IS RANDOM  
AND UNFAIR.  
LIFE IS PANDEM-  
ONIUM

PANCH (to Chip) Staphylococcus

ALL SPELLERS  
THAT'S THE REASON WE DESPAIR

CHIP  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

CONEYBEAR  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

CHIP  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

BARFEE  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

PANCH: “broccoli”

CONEYBEAR

I KNEW THAT WORD.

OLIVE

I KNEW THAT WORD.

BARFEE

I KNEW THAT WORD.

ALL SPELLERS

GODDAMN IT!

CHIP

IT IS SUCH A CALAMITY.

ALL SPELLERS

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

THE BEST SPELLERS

CHIP

DON'T NECESSARILY WIN.

ALL SPELLERS

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM.

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM.

*audience volunteers recruited into dance*

MARCY

SET YOUR SIGHTS.

I AM ON A MISSION.

PANCH: Miss Park. “antediluvian”

SCHWARZY

WE HAVE RIGHTS.

*(to aud volunteer): We have rights.*

THAT'S WHY WE COMPLAIN.

PANCH: Mr. Barfee, “Halitosis”

BARFEE

DAMN LIFE BITES

BUT I LIKE COMPETITION

PANCH: Miss Ostrovsky: “Schematic.”

OLIVE

IN THESE LIGHTS  
CAN YOU FEEL OUR PAIN

PANCH: Somebody spell, “crayon”.

*Audience volunteers engineered to dance in a circle alone, while other spellers point and laugh*

MITCH

LIFE IS RANDOM  
AND UNFAIR  
LIFE IS PANDEM-  
ONIUM

ALL SPELLERS

THAT’S THE REASON WE DESPAIR:

CHIP

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

MITCH

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

CHIP

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

BARFEE

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

*In next section spellers are swinging on gymnasium ropes, running around and throwing vocabulary cards, spinning the bleachers, generally wreaking havoc*

PANCH: “Dinosaur”

CHIP

I KNEW THAT WORD.

ALL SPELLERS

I KNEW THAT WORD.

CHIP



I KNEW THAT WORD.

ALL

GODDAMIT!  
IT IS SUCH A CALAMITY  
WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?  
THE BEST SPELLERS

CHIP

DON'T NECESSARILY

CHIP

WIN  
THEY DON'T WIN  
THEY DON'T WIN  
THEY DON'T WIN

OTHER SPELLERS

LIFE IS PANDE-MONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDE-MONIUM

BARFEE

NO THEY DON'T

CHIP & OTHERS

LIFE IS RANDOM AND UNFAIR

CHIP

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

YES IT IS

OH YEAH

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

OTHER SPELLERS

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS  
PANDE, PANDE  
PANDE, PANDE  
PANDEMONIUM!

CHIP

YES IT IS!

OTHER SPELLERS

YEAH!

*At end of song, everyone is perfectly back in place on bleachers, just as before the song.*

PANCH

Miss Schwartzandgrubenierre.

*Schwarzy crosses to mic.*

RONA

Miss Schwartzandgrubenierre has proposed a constitutional amendment lowering the voting age to ten.

PANCH

Cystitis

SCHWARZY

Thithtitith? May I please have the definition of that word?

PANCH

An inflammation of the urinary bladder.

SCHWARZY

And use in a sentence please?

PANCH

Sally's mother told her it was her cystitis that made her special.

SCHWARZY

Cystitis. I think I studied this one with my dads.

*Dad Carl is drilling Schwarzy- CARL played by Coneybear, DAN by Mitch.  
It's a very fast drill- he keeps them coming and she spells extremely quickly.*

CARL

*segue*

SCHWARZY

*s-e-g-u-e*

CARL

good. siphon.

SCHWARZY

*s-i-p-h-o-n*

good. Cystitis  
CARL

S-  
SCHWARZY

No. Think.  
CARL

C-  
SCHWARZY

good  
CARL

i-  
SCHWARZY

No ! Logainne- are you concentrating?  
CARL

Yes-  
SCHWARZY

Maybe it's time for a break?  
DAN

Dan, we're in the middle of a word here  
CARL

You know she doesn't spell well when her blood-sugar is low, Carl  
DAN

We gotta build up her stamina- The bee could last three hours  
CARL

Don't you talk to me about stamina, Carl!  
DAN

Daddy conference. Now.  
CARL

SCHWARZY

No, dads, let me get this one first, please!

PANCH

We need a spelling, please, Logainne.

SCHWARZY

(struggling through her sad memory)

Cystitis. C-Y-S-T-I-T-I-S. Cystitis.

PANCH

That is correct. Mr. Coneybear.

RONA

Mr. Coneybear makes his own clothes

*(Leaf is very proud that this has been announced. This whole experience is just terribly amusing to him.)*

PANCH

Acouchi

CONEYBEAR

A-what?

PANCH

Listen to the whole word, please. Acouchi.

CONEYBEAR

At a spelling bee!?? What's it mean?

PANCH

“A South American rodent of the genus Myoprocta, resembling an agouti.”

CONEYBEAR

It's funny how I keep getting South American rodents.

PANCH

Hilarious.

CONEYBEAR

Look, honestly? I've never heard this word before- and I have no idea how to spell it.

PANCH

Would you like to forfeit your turn ? *(MUSIC CUE)*

*thinks about it, music starts*

RONA  
Why don't you just give it your best shot Mr. Coneybear?

CONEYBEAR

I'M NOT THAT SMART.  
MY SIBLINGS HAVE BEEN TELLING ME THAT FOR YEARS-  
THAT I'M NOT THAT SMART.  
WE'RE SCHOOLED AT HOME  
(THEY SEE WHO'S BRIGHT)  
IT BREAKS MY HEART..  
I'M NOT THAT SMART.

I HAVE A GENTLE PERSONALITY  
WHICH, YOU'LL ALL AGREE,  
IS ANATH'MA TO MY MORE AGGRESSIVE FAMILY.  
EVERYONE KEEPS SWATTING

FAMILY

DUMB KID

CONEYBEAR

EVERYONE KEEPS YELLING

FAMILY

DUMB KID

CONEYBEAR

HOW COULD A FLEA  
SUCH AS ME  
THINK HE'D BE  
GOOD AT SPELLING?  
HOW?  
I DON'T KNOW.

I LIKE MY HAIR.  
REALLY IT IS PLEASANT TO THE TOUCH.  
I TOSS MY HAIR. (*HE DOES*)  
A BIT TOO MUCH. (*HE DOES AGAIN*)  
IT DOESN'T MOVE.  
IT SIMPLY SITS.  
I MAKE A PART. (*HE DOES*)  
I'M NOT THAT SMART.

*(BALLET BREAK)*

CONEYBEAR

BA DA DE DA (ETC)  
DOODLE DOODLE DOODLE....

PANCH

Mr. Coneybear!

CONEYBEAR

I've forgotten the word.

PANCH

Oh my God. Acouchi.

CONEYBEAR

Right, the rodent resembling the other rodent – what was the other...  
*(trance takes him)* A-C-O-U-C-H-I. Acouchi.

PANCH

That is correct

CONEYBEAR

*(stunned)*

I MIGHT BE SMART.  
MY SIBLINGS *(POINTS THEM OUT)* CAN'T BELIEVE THAT I GOT IT RIGHT.  
BUT I GOT IT RIGHT.  
*(TO PANCH)* RIGHT?  
I DIDN'T CHEAT  
I SAW THIS LIGHT  
AND IT WAS NEAT  
I LIKE TO LAUGH  
I LIKE TO SPELL  
I LIKE TO NEVER HEAR THE BELL.  
AND IF THIS COMPETITION'S HELL...  
AT LEAST I'M FINALLY A PART.  
I FEEL MY HEART  
BEGIN TO SWELL  
I LIKE- I LOVE- TO SPELL

I like it a lot.

*AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER slot. Actor playing Panch is using his discretion on where to call audience volunteers depending on how many remain.*

*Rona comments, definition and sentences, and reaction to audience members ‘dinged’ out continue as indicated.*

Miss Ostrovsky PANCH

RONA  
(surprised to discover this information as reading)  
Miss Ostrovsky’s mother is currently in *India* on a 9-month spiritual quest!

FLAGELLATE PANCH

flagellate- um- that’s a verb right? OLIVE

Yes. PANCH

May I have a definition? OLIVE

I need to ask you to speak clearly into the microphone PANCH

Sorry. OLIVE

RONA  
Don’t be sorry, just turn and face us,  
*(Olive turns and steps towards the desk)*  
*Panch & Rona ad-lib... ”no, don’t walk towards us”, “just pivot your head”, “ now speak into the microphone, now—no...”*  
*Olive ends up twisted and confused.*

RONA  
You know, this girl needs to learn how to stand like a champion! *(as she approaches Olive and corrects her)* Shoulders back. Chin up. Hair away from the face. Very good.

*Rona turns away and Olive’s posture collapses again*

RONA  
*(seeing this)*  
It’s a hard age for girls.

CONEYBEAR  
(*Coneybear falls off his chair*)

I fell.

(*Coneybear put his helmet on*)

RONA

And boys.

With this difference: Ask a child in a spelling bee if they expect to win, and boys and girls are trained to respond differently. The correct response for boys is:

BARFEE

I'm taking it all. You're all going down!

RONA

while the correct response for girls is:

SCHWARZY

Honestly, I think there's a good chance I would do okay, but it's unlikely I'd win the whole thing, I'm a good speller, but I'm not a truly great speller, and though I have trained hard there's so much luck involved.

RONA

though in my experience the girls are sometimes *thinking*

SCHWARZY

I'm taking it all. You're all going down, suckas!

RONA

while the boys are sometimes thinking

BARFEE

I really don't know—am I good enough, or not?

*beat*

OLIVE

(*out, simply, to audience*)

I'm thinking about does flagellate have one ell or two—and also about how if you take the “w” of answer and the “h” in ghost and the extra “a” in aardvark and the “t” in listen, you could keep saying “what” but nobody would hear, cause the whole word would be silent.

RONA



You still need to speak up, Miss Ostrovsky.

OLIVE

FLAGELLATE. F-L-A-G-E-L...L...A-T-E.  
Flagellate.

PANCH

Very good on the volume. And correct.

CHIP

*(to Coneybear, over spellers between them—whispered)*

Leaf- that girl in the second row in the fuzzy sweater? Is that your sister?

CONEYBEAR

Yeah, that's Marigold.

### **AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER**

*-Rona comment from list, at discretion of actor playing Rona.*

*-Panch/Speller ad lib on word, definition, sentence from list, at discretion of actor playing Panch. At this point, actor playing Panch has decided which volunteer should be last one standing and attempts to rig accordingly. One is generally chosen to be retained and given word with multiple acceptable answers as others eliminated on difficult words. Outcome as appropriate, including sung Goodbye variation if speller eliminated*

PANCH

Mr. Barfee

BARFEE

*(ad-libbed frustration with name pronunciation, could just be to himself mimicking, important thing is to be brief and varied in reactions)* It's Barfee.

RONA

Mr. Barfee made it to the finals last year but had to be eliminated for health related reasons

*Momentary flashback*

BARFEE

Were there peanuts in the brownies?

Cause they said there wouldn't be no peanuts in the brownies!

RONA

I'm glad to see him back and spelling so well.

Hasenpfeffer. PANCH

Yes of course, hasenpfeffer. A highly seasoned rabbit stew, often served with sour cream? BARFEE

Rabbit stew, that's correct. PANCH

My old friend. One moment please. BARFEE

He's going for the foot. (*MUSIC CUE*) RONA

BARFEE  
MAGIC FOOT  
TAKE ME TO THE FINAL ROUND  
MAGIC FOOT  
BARELY LIFTED OFF THE GROUND  
MAGIC FOOT  
DO IT WITHOUT MAKING A SOUND  
MAGIC FOOT  
WRITE THE LETTER  
MAGIC FOOT  
WRITE THE PERFECT LETTER  
MAGIC FOOT  
IT'S AN ALPHABETTER WAY TO SPELL

Okay, let's see what we got here, foot-  
H-A-S-E N- Hasen  
P F E F F pfeff  
E- R- Let's- go!

MAGIC FOOT  
BE SPECIFIC  
MAGIC FOOT  
IT'S HORRIFIC IF YOU'RE NOT SPECIFIC  
MAGIC FOOT  
IT'S TERRIFIC WHEN YOU MAKE A WORD  
WITH YOUR FOOT  
MAGIC FOOT

MAGIC FOOT  
MAGIC FOOT  
MAGIC FOOT

COMPANY

BARFEE  
MAGIC FOOT, MAGIC FOOT  
DON'T GO KAPUT FOOT  
MAGIC FOOT MAGIC FOOT  
WRITE THE GODDAMN LETTER  
*DOOT GA DOOT GA DOOT*  
*COME ON FOOT, COME ON!*  
IT'S AN ALPHABETTER  
WAY TO  
SPELL

COMPANY  
MAGIC FOOOOOOOT!  
  
MAGIC FOOOOOOOT!  
  
MAGIC FOOOOOOOT!

DO DO DO DO  
DO DO DO DO DO  
DO DO DO DO DO  
AHHHHHHH

MAGIC FOOT  
WRITE THAT LETTER!  
MAGIC FOOT  
WRITE THE STUPID LETTER!  
MAGIC FOOT  
IT'S AN ALPHABETTER  
WAY TO  
SPELL

MAGIC FOOT MAGIC FOOT!  
  
MAGIC FOOT, MAGIC FOOT!  
  
MAGIC FOOT, MAGIC FOOT!

MAGIC FOOT,  
MAGIC FOOT,  
MAGIC FOOT

FOOT!

ALL

*(Playoff music)*

COMPANY  
MAGIC FOOT MAGIC FOOT MAGIC FOOT

**AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER**

*Rona comment from list, at discretion of actor playing Rona.*

*-Panch/Speller ad lib on word, definition, sentence from list, at discretion of actor playing Panch. This spot should eliminate one of the final two volunteers left. If there is only one volunteer left at this point, skip this volunteer spot.*

Miss Park PANCH

Miss Park skipped fourth and fifth grades. She's on track to become the youngest high school freshman in parochial school history. RONA

Miss Park, your word is QAIMAQAM PANCH

Qaimaqam. A lieutenant or deputy in the Ottoman Empire. A rare exception to the Q-U rule. From the Turkish. Q-A-I-M-A-Q-A-M. Qaimaqam. PARK

That's remarkable. PANCH

And correct. PARK

Miss Park is all business RONA

I am not. (genuinely surprised to hear this is thought of her) MARCY

Mr. Tolentino PANCH

CHIP [generally VOICEOVER]  
*(caught up in his fantasy)*  
*Marigold ...*  
*Marigold Coneybear...*  
*That's a really lovely sweater, Marigold...*

Chip. Chip. Chip! PANCH

CHIP

Sorry – is it my turn to spell?

PANCH

Yes!

RONA

A rare break in concentration from Mr. Tolentino

CHIP

Um, can you maybe skip me now and ask me two in a row later?

PANCH

Why would you want to do that?

CHIP

I'd rather not say?

PANCH

You can either take your turn now or forfeit.

CHIP

I'll take my turn now

RONA

Another excellent decision by the incumbent

PANCH

TITTUP

CHIP

what?

PANCH

The word is: TITTUP.

CHIP

definition please

PANCH

It means “lively movement or behavior”, or “to move restlessly.” It refers to the sound of horses hooves. -tittup, tittup, tittup.

CHIP

Tittup. T...I... (*reluctantly, but he knows it*)T...U Oh wait. Two ts. You heard both, right? Backing up, T-I-T-T-U-P . Tittup.

*ding*

PANCH  
I'm sorry, the correct spelling is T-I-T-T-U-P. Tittup.

CHIP  
That's exactly what I said.

PANCH  
But first you said "T-I-T-U- Oh wait, two ts...

CHIP  
No, but, I wasn't sure if you *heard* both ts. I obviously know how to spell it

PANCH  
(*can overlap above*)  
"If you start to spell a word you may start over...(MUSIC CUE)

ALL  
...but the sequences of letters already spoken may not be changed"

CHIP  
(*can overlap above*)  
That's not fair. I got it right. I can't get out on a word I spelled right.

MITCH  
LIFE IS RANDOM AND UNFAIR  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

CHIP  
I said *two t's*. I *won* last year.

MITCH  
THAT'S THE REASON WE DESPAIR

MITCH/SPELLERS  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM  
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

MITCH  
You can't comfort these damn kids. They don't yet know that the good don't always win, so there's nothing you can say to cheer them up when they lose. I want to tell them disappointment doesn't last—but from what I've seen disappointment lasts like hell. I want to tell them words

don't matter; but from what I've seen words can get you killed. I just want to beat them up a little, so they understand that pain has degrees, and this is nothing—this is nothing, you little freaks. But that would violate my parole. So I do what I can. I give them a hug and a juice box. I'm here to give comfort. Let's go.

CHIP

Miss Peretti, can I have one more chance? Please?

*Mitch looks to Rona, Rona looks to Panch, Panch looks at the bell—and rings it.*

*Ding*

MITCH

Let's go kid. (*MUSIC CUE*)

SPELLERS

GOODBYE  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE  
GOODBYE, GOOD BYE, GOODBYE...

RONA

GOOD LORD,  
THAT'S WHAT'S SWELL ABOUT SPELLING BEES.  
I AM FLOORED  
BY HOW LAST YEAR'S BIG CHEESE  
BECOMES THIS YEAR'S DISASTER.  
AND EXITS WITH NEW HUMILITY.

IT'S A WIDE-OPEN JAMBOREE  
WHEN THE WINNERS LOSE SURPRISINGLY.  
NOW, I LOVE WHAT I SEE.  
I SEE HOPE AND POSSIBILITY.  
WHEN THE FAVORITE LOSES 1-2-3,

SPELLERS

Bye!

RONA

THAT'S MY FAVORITE MOMENT OF THE BEE.

CHIP

*(almost an aside, as he exits)*

Shut up

**PANCH CALLS AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER**

*RONA comment from list, at discretion of actor playing Rona*

*Word given to last remaining audience volunteer, volunteer is told there is no known definition. Audience member usually spells the word “correctly” – ie, unless their answer is entirely implausible they are retained, to the great surprise of Panch and Rona, amazed at the volunteer’s good spelling.*

*Eg (following is from Jay Reiss’s instructions to volunteers and his own special made-up word) “Catterjunes”*

*When asked for definition: That definition is unknown.*

*--It exists in the oral tradition, seems to be an old Nantucket whaling term, there is one written citation*

*Use in sentence (as though making it up) “The neap tide is upon us. The leviathan nears: Catterjunes.”*

*Then unless audience volunteer radically misspells phonetically, they are kept in to the great “surprise” of Rona and Panch*

*Same volunteer is immediately called again. He/She is given a conspicuously, preferably ridiculously, difficult word. Mitch rises before spelling even begins and looms nearby.*

*After bell - (MUSIC CUE) - Mitch comes out, puts arm around last volunteer and sings to him or her*

MITCH

MY FRIEND, YOU WILL BE MISSED  
BUT NOW GO WITH DIGNITY  
THIS ENDS BUT FIRST ON OUR LIST.  
YOU SHOULD GO WITH PRIDE

YOU’VE BEEN THE BEST-LOOKING [DUDE/BABE/KID] WE’VE HAD ALL  
DAY.  
YOU’RE A REAL SMART DUDE AS WELL  
NOW GO HOME AND SPELL.  
GIVE YOUR SQUEEZE SOME AFFECTION.  
C’MON MAKE A CONNECTION  
SPELL WITH PATIENCE AND CARE.  
THAT DUDE IS MY PRAYER



ALL  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE,  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE,  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE,  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE

MITCH  
YOU NEED THE STRENGTH TO  
PRETEND IT'S NO BIG DEAL.  
TRY TO LOOK LIKE YOU DON'T  
CARE.  
TRY NOT TO CRY, LORD  
IN FRONT OF A BROTHER  
DON'T EMBARRASS YOUR  
MOTHER.  
  
MAKE YOUR EXIT WITH CARE.  
THAT IS MY

KIDS  
OOOOHHHH  
OOOOHHHH  
OOOOHHHH  
  
AAAHHHH  
AAAHHHH  
AHHH  
  
NOT YOUR MOTHER!  
OOOOHHHH

PRAYER  
ALL

GOODBYE GOODBYE.  
MITCH

ALL  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE,  
GOODBYE, GOODBYE.  
BYE BYE BYE GOODBYE  
GOODBYE GOODBYE  
GOODBYE GOODBYE  
GOODBYE GOODBYE  
GOODBYE GOODBYE  
GOOD  
GOOD

MITCH  
GOOD!  
BYE!  
*MR/MISS \_\_\_\_\_ (fills in name of final volunteer)*

ALL  
GOODBYE!

*Chip enters from lobby.  
kids on stage get to take a break during below*

PANCH

(comes in with refreshments for kids)

Snack break. (*MUSIC CUE*)

CHIP

(*ad libs along these lines*)

Snack break.

Snack break.

Chocolate chip cookies. Brownies. All one dollar. Anybody?

-Can you believe they make me do this? So humiliating.

Screw it. Who wants free candy?

(*Chip begins throwing candies from his box into the audience; continues doing so throughout his song*)

CHIP

IT IS TRADITION  
THAT THE PERSON ELIMINATED  
FROM THE COMPETITION,  
IS FAIR-GAME FOR DERISION,  
ESPECIALLY THE ALPHA MALE,  
WHO'LL SELL GOODIES AT THE BAKE SALE.  
ANYONE FOR BROWNIES?  
ANYONE FOR CHOC'LATE CHIPS?  
ANYONE FOR ANYTHING THAT ISN'T DATED?

HOW COULD I  
HAVE BEEN  
ELIM-  
INATED?

YOU WANNA KNOW HOW?  
YOU WANNA KNOW HOW?  
YOU WANNA KNOW WHY?

MY UNFORTUNATE ERECTION  
IS DESTROYING MY PERFECTION.  
IT IS MY RECOLLECTION  
THAT EVERYTHING I ONCE DID  
I DID PERFECTLY.

Last year's champ defeated early!

BECAUSE OF  
MARIGOLD CONEYBEAR.  
BECAUSE THERE'S SOMETHING

AND NOT A THING BETWEEN US.  
I DON'T BLAME MY BRAIN,  
BUT I DO BLAME MY PENIS.

MY UNFORTUNATE PROTUBERANCE  
SEEMS TO HAVE IT'S OWN EXUBERANCE.  
ANYONE FOR M & MS?  
DELICIOUS AND APPROPRIATE.  
ANYONE FOR CHEWY GOOBERS?  
EXPENSIVE.  
ANYONE FOR BUYING THE SHIT THAT I'M SELLING,  
BECAUSE MY STIFFY HAS RUINED MY SPELLING?

ERECTION,  
ERECTION,  
MY UNFORTUNATE ERECTION.  
WHOA.  
IS RUINING MY LIFE,  
IS RUINING MY WORLD,  
IS RUINING MY RUINING,  
RUINING, RUINING MY LIFE.  
MY LIFE!

ADULTHOOD BRINGS IT'S OWN PECULIAR REJECTION,  
WHICH IS WHY I'M SELLING THIS P.T.A. CONFECTION.  
IT WILL RUIN YOUR COMPLEXION.  
ALL BECAUSE OF MY UNFORTUNATE  
ERECTION.  
OH GOD

BARFEE

See you next year.

*Chip throws package of peanut M&Ms at Barfee*

BARFEE

What are you nuts!  
*(sees what it is)*  
Nuts! You threw the yellow ones!

BARFEE *(cont'd)*

Will someone pick up the pa-? I can't be near the peanuts!

*Olive comes and picks up the package. Gives it back to Chip.*

BARFEE

You could be disqualified for that—if you hadn't already been eliminated!

*Rona separates the kids – ad-libs to get them to settle down [William, sit down. Chip, I'm very disappointed...].*

CHIP

You know something, Barf: I may have lost, but you are the biggest loser here  
(walks away)

BARFEE

Oh yeah? Well, that is a common misperception.

*Chip holds up and shakes a bag or two of peanut M&M's to threaten Barfee.*

*Rona grabs Chip and pulls him offstage.*

*Chip and Barfee shout ad-libs at each other as Chip exits [eg: Barfee- "This is a bully-free zone" (from a set that had that sign visible on stage)]*

OLIVE

Sorry about that- William, right? I'm Olive.

BARFEE

I know your name. Look, I do not need pity from a person named after a vegetable.

OLIVE

It's a fruit.

BARFEE

Well it's a disgusting fruit, and I can't keep them down.

OLIVE

*(this really is hurtful enough that she'll give up and walk away)*

Oh.

BARFEE

I guess it's okay for a name though.

OLIVE

Did you know that if you switch the first two vowels in "olive" it becomes "I love" ?

BARFEE

*(thinks about it)*

Did you know that if you switch the first two vowels in "William" it becomes "William"?

OLIVE  
Yeah but you can switch the next two –then it’s “will aim”.

BARFEE  
Are these really the kind of things you think about?

OLIVE  
Um. Yeah?

BARFEE  
Okay.  
I’m more of a science guy myself

OLIVE  
Well you’re also a really great speller.

BARFEE  
Yeah? Thanks.

*Olive goes to join the others.*

BARFEE  
*(after they have parted)*  
“Olive.” “I love.” – That’s so retarded. (*MUSIC CUE*)

*Adults re-enter*

RONA  
Ladies and gentlemen our final spellers. Let’s give them a hand.

RONA  
We have, home-schooled from the Basin, Leaf Coneybear:

CONEYBEAR  
Mom, I’m in the finals!!

RONA  
From our Lady of Intermittent Sorrows, Miss Marcy Park

MARCY  
I’m not all business

RONA  
From Cold Spring Country Day, Mr. William Barfee

BARFEE

*(Ad lib frustration, ayayay!, or, for goodness sake)*

RONA

From Garrison Elementary Miss Olive Ostrovsky

OLIVE

(needs to communicate that dad may call her back but doesn't get farther than)  
Miss Peretti, my dad...

RONA

And from the Magna Magnet Grammar School, Miss Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre.

SCHWARZY

I'd like to take one moment to thank my two fathers Daniel Schwartz and Carl Grubenierre who've been so supportive of me and all my endeavors.  
Thank you dads.

*as they're fixing her up*

CARL

WE HATE LOSERS.

[Dan (*agreeing*) No one likes a loser]

WHICH IS WHY WE DISCIPLINE.

GOD HATES LOSERS

[D:But you are a winner.]

BECAUSE LOSERS DO NOT KNOW HOW TO WIN.

[D: And we have faith in you, honey]

[C: Yes we do. Go get 'em!]

SCHWARZY

I HOPE YOU CAN LOVE ME, AMERICA.

I'M GUNNING FOR FIRST PRIZE.

HERE'S WHY YOU SHOULD LOVE ME, AMERICA:

MY NEEDS I CANNOT OVEREMPHASIZE.

I MAKE MYSELF CRAZY

BEING WHAT MY DADS HOPE I'LL BE.

BUT WHAT ABOUT ME, DADS?

WHAT ABOUT ME?

JESUS CHRIST, WHAT ABOUT ME?

CARL

Practice your breathing, Logainne.

SCHWARZY

THOUGH I PRACTICE YOGA, I DON'T BREATHE

I TRY NOT TO DISAPPOINT,

BUT STILL I  
DISAPPOINT THE DADS  
WHO MY FRIENDS MOCK.  
KIDS ARE MEAN, KIDS'LL TALK.  
ALL MY SO-CALLED "FRIENDS"  
ROLL THEIR EYES  
SO INCREDIBLY PETTY.  
BECAUSE MY DADS ARE MY DADS  
AND ALRIGHT ENOUGH ALREADY.

SCHWARZY/SPELLERS

WOE IS ME  
WOE IS ME

SCHWARZY  
WHICH IS WHY I GOTTA WIN THIS SPELLING BEE

*The dads are taking pre-bee photos*

CARL: (*wanting Logainne to pose by herself*): Take another picture for her B.M.

SCHWARZY: Dad!

DAN: Don't call her that, Carl.

CARL: Sorry. Her "Birth Mother"

SCHWARZY: Peggy Jenkins.

DAN: Who'd be very proud if she could see you spell.

SCHWARZY  
MY BIRTH MOTHER LIVES IN KANSAS, MO.  
IN A TRAILER, IN A PARK.

DADS/SPELLERS

TORNADOES.

SCHWARZY  
EVERY NOW AND THEN SHE SENDS A CARD.  
"LIFE AND MEN," SHE WRITES, "ARE HARD."  
SHE WOULD LIKE TO MEET ME WHEN I'M GROWN.  
AND (*HOLDING OUT THE BREASTS OF HER JACKET*)  
I'VE BURST LIKE A COMET.

I'M SO STRESSED BY MY STRESS  
I JUST WANT TO UP AND VOMIT.

SCHWARZY/SPELLERS

WOE IS ME  
WOE IS ME

SCHWARZY  
WHICH IS WHY I GOTTA WIN THIS SPELLING

DADS/SPELLERS

BE SMART  
BE COOL  
BE AN ADULT  
BE REMARKABLY ADROIT  
IN SOCIAL SITUATIONS

SCHWARZY WOE IS ME  WOE IS ME	DADS/SPELLERS BE SMART, BE COOL BE SMART, BE COOL BE SMART, BE COOL BE SMART, BE
--	--

SCHWARZY/ DADS/SPELLERS  
WHICH IS WHY WE GOTTA WIN THIS  
WHICH IS WHY SHE'S GOTTA WIN  
THIS SPELLING BEE.

*In the next section, rounds of spelling continue in increasingly fast motion, so that we feel we are going through several rounds of finalists battling word after word*

### **SPELLING MONTAGE**

PANCH

Miss Schwarzandgrubeniere. Please spell Indicant.

SCHWARZY  
(to a beat)

Indicant. I-N-D-I-C-A-N-T. Indicant.

PANCH

Correct. Mr. Coneybear. Please spell vulpine



CONEYBEAR

*(to faster beat, fast-motion trance)*

Vulpine. V-u-l-p-i-n-e. Vulpine

PANCH

Correct. Miss Ostrovsky  
Hallux.

*continues to speed up, fast mo:*

OLIVE

Hallux?

PANCH

Hallux.

OLIVE

h-a-l-l-u-x hallux.

PANCH

Correct. Mr. Barfee.

BARFEE

It's Barfee.

PANCH

Please spell palaver.

BARFEE

Yes, of course, one moment please. P-a-l-a-v-e-r. Palaver.  
*palaver- fast mo magic foot and spelled correctly*

PANCH

That's correct.

BARFEE

I know.

PANCH

Miss Park. Rooibos

PARK

*(extremely sped up, she spells correctly)*

*Rooibos*

PANCH

Correct. Miss Schwartzandgrubenierre. Tilapia

SCHWARZY

*Tilapia*

*extremely sped up back and forth and spelling correctly*

PANCH

*Correct. Mr. Coneybear. Incomprehensibly fast word.*

CONEYBEAR

*[incomprehensibly fast word and spelling]*

PANCH

*Correct. Miss. Ostrovsky. Incomprehensibly fast word.*

OLIVE

*(spelling starts incomprehensibly fast and becomes slow mo at very end)*

*... B...I...C*

PANCH

*Slow-mo*

*Mr. Barfee*

BARFEE

*It's Mr. Barfee*

PANCH

*Please spell weevil*

BARFEE

*Why yes, of course. W-E-E-V-I-L. Weevil.*

*Back to fast speed*

*PANCH: That is correct.*

*BARFEE: I know.*

*PANCH: Miss Schwarz and Grubeniere, please spell Peregrine.*

*SCHWARZY: Part of speech*

*PANCH: Noun.*

*CONEYBEAR: Chloro- what?*

*PANCH: Form*

*OLIVE: from the tupi?*

PANCH: No.

BARFEE: yes, of course?

PANCH: of course.

PARK: Could you use it in a sentence?

PANCH: Yes.

SCHWARZY L-I

CONEYBEAR: V-A

OLIVE: Q-U

BARFEE: M-N

PARK: P-E. Clepe.

PANCH

*That is correct  
Mr. Coneybear  
Yes, that is correct  
Miss Park  
That is correct, that is correct,  
that is correct, that is correct,  
That is correct correct correct correct*

*As spellers circle, in sound montage we also hear CONEYBEAR: I am smart, I am smart,  
and MARCY: I'm not all business...*

PANCH

*Correct correct correct correct  
Correct correct correct correct*

*Rings bell*

PANCH

I'm sorry, that is incorrect.

*gasp—It's Coneybear left up by mic*

CONEYBEAR

It is?

PANCH

the correct ending is i-l-l-a, chinchilla.

CONEYBEAR

I HEAR THE BELL.  
THAT, I THINK, IS NOT AN INVITING SOUND:  
THAT LITTLE DING.  
TO ME IT BRINGS  
A PLAINTIVE AIR.  
I ALWAYS THOUGHT THAT LIFE WAS FAIR.  
I MEAN I NEVER FELT A SMIDGEON OF DESPAIR.  
THEY SAY A BELL CAN BREAK YOUR HEART;  
BUT JUST NOT MINE,  
SINCE I O-PINE  
I THINK- I KNOW- I'M SMART  
Apple juice please.

*Coneybear shakes Mitch's hand and exits*

PANCH

Mr. Barfee

BARFEE

*(given up by this point)*

Whatever.

RONA

Mr. Barfee has a sea anemone circus in his basement.

BARFEE

*(pinpointing people in different sections of audience as real and fake moms)*

My fake mom Sheila thinks my hobbies are weird, but my real mom Joan says the science will one day payoff. And also I will grow up to be incredibly handsome.

PANCH

Antihistamine

BARFEE

Luck of the draw. One moment please.

A-N-T-I-H-I-S-T-A-M-I-N-E.

Antihistamine Mr. Pancheee

Doug Panch. PANCH

Will Barfée BARFEE

Miss Park PANCH

Miss Park speaks five languages. RONA

No I don't MARCY  
*(she's had it with these comments)*

Don't you? RONA

No. MARCY

Well it also says that you won your school's handwriting competition. RONA

And does it say that I only sleep three hours a night, and I hide in the bathroom cabinet, and I'm not allowed to cry? MARCY

No, it doesn't say that. RONA  
*(checking list)*

Well, it should. And it should say...*(MUSIC CUE)* MARCY

I SPEAK SIX LANGUAGES. (RONA: Ah. Six.)  
EVERY LANGUAGE EASY  
EASY AS THE RECIPE FOR MAKING JELLO.  
I SPEAK SIX LANGUAGES  
AND I CAN SAY HELLO  
IN AT LEAST SEVEN MORE.

RONA

It does say you're an athlete

MARCY

TO EXCEL IN ATHLETICS IS NOT DIFFICULT IF ONE HAS THE  
TEMPERAMENT.  
APPARENTLY I HAVE THE TEMPERAMENT.  
YES I SCORE SOME GOALS.  
SO UNFAZED AM I,  
AS MY LIFE UNSCROLLS  
UNAMAZED AM I  
I DON'T LIKE TO BRAG  
AND I WON'T CAUSE I DON'T HAVE TO BUT  
I SPEAK SIX LANGUAGES.  
ALL AMERICAN IN HOCKEY.  
AND EVERYTIME I STRETCH I STRETCH WITHOUT GETTING SORE.  
I SPEAK SIX LANGUAGES  
AND I LIKE THE THEME FROM "ROCKY"  
THOUGH I PLAY MOZART MORE.

*Throughout song, Marcy is featured doing splits, cartwheels, dancing in several styles, twirling and tossing a baton, and kick-chopping a board in half*

MARCY

I ACHIEVE MY GOALS;  
SO UNFAZED AM I.  
AS MY LIFE UNSCROLLS  
UNAMAZED AM I.  
WINNING IS A JOB  
FROM WHICH GET NO REAL ENJOYMENT, BUT  
  
JE PEUX PARLER SIX LANGUES  
CADA IDIO MAES SIMPLE  
JERRO OH YO NO RESHIPE NO YESASHESADES  
YA GAVARU SHETZ YATZUKIM  
V'ANI YODAT SHALOM

GIRLS

OH AHH  
AAHHH  
  
WINNING IS A JOB  
AND SHE GETS NO  
REAL ENJOYMENT BUT  
OOH  
AAAHH  
SA SHA DES  
YA ZI KI  
YOR DAT SHALOM  
IM NOCH MINDESTENS  
SIEBEN MEHR

*Marcy goes and plays piano.*

MARCY  
I SPEAK SIX LANGUAGES  
I AM SO SICK AND TI-RED  
OF ALWAYS BEING THE BEST  
AND THE BRIGHTEST AT EVERY MASS.  
SIX LOUSY LANGUAGES!  
AND FOR MY HEIGHT I'M THE LIGHTEST  
*Marcy plays one last chord on piano and walks away*  
OF THE GIRLS IN MY CLASS.

MARCY  
I KNOW SIX LANGUAGES  
THAT'S ONE, TWO,  
THREE, FOUR,  
FIVE,  
SIX !

GIRLS  
SHE KNOWS SIX LANGUAGES  
SHE KNOWS, SHE KNOWS  
SHE KNOWS, SHE KNOWS  
SHE KNOWS, SHE KNOWS  
SIX!

RONA  
That is very impressive- especially the piano.  
*("especially the piano" meaning "not the table" that in Dan Knechtges and James  
Lapine's staging Marcy has karate-chopped in half at end of song)*

PANCH  
Miss Park the word is Camouflage.

MARCY  
Camouflage.  
*(to herself)* Dear Jesus, can't you come up with a harder word than that?

JESUS  
*(from offstage)*  
Of course I can, my child

ALL  
AAAAAHHHHHHH!

*JESUS appears, played by actor playing Chip.*  
*MARCY is absolutely astounded to see him—none of her parochial education has  
prepared her for this.*

MARCY  
Jesus?

JESUS  
Marcy?

MARCY  
I knew you were Asian! Hi !  
*(depending on casting, we sometimes replace with: Wow- Jesus-I knew you were Asian!)*

JESUS  
Hi

MARCY  
How are you?

JESUS  
I'm good. -Is that your prayer, Marcy, for a more difficult word?

MARCY  
Well yeah it was but now that you're here can I ask for something better?

JESUS  
I'm here for you now Marcy. *C'est pour toi que je suis ici.*

MARCY  
*(convinced, she decides to take this seriously and ask something she really would like to know)*  
Jesus... I was wondering what would happen if I *didn't* win today.

JESUS  
What do you think would happen?

MARCY  
I don't know, but what I mean is, would you be disappointed with me if I lost?

JESUS  
Of course not- but Marcy? I also won't be disappointed with you if you win.  
*Beat as she looks confused*

MARCY  
You're saying it's up to me then?

JESUS  
Yes, and also, this isn't the kind of thing I care very much about.



ALL

AAAAAHHHHHHH!

MARCY

Camouflage. C-A-M. . . O-U (*still deciding*) F-L. . .A. . .J (*and as soon as she dares miss the first letter, she takes more and more joy in getting it wrong*) . . .Z!! . . .H!!! Camaflajzh!  
Ding (MUSIC CUE)

MARCY

GIRLS

I BLEW THAT WORD.

I BLEW THAT WORD

PRAISE JESUS!

LIFE HAS SUCH POSSIBILITY

HERE'S WHERE I BEGIN

THE BEST SPELLER WON'T NECESSARILY WIN!!

I WON'T WIN! I WON'T WIN!

I WON'T WIN!

SHE BLEW THAT WORD

PRAISE JESUS!

SHE WON'T WIN

GOODBYE!

*MITCH approaches MARCY.*

*SHE leaps joyfully into his arms and HE carries her offstage*

RONA

Three spellers remain!

PANCH

Miss Schwarzandgrubeniene.

SCHWARZY

Dads! I'm in the final three!

*Olive's cell phone rings.*

RONA

Ladies and gentlemen please turn off all cell phones, pagers, and

OLIVE

Oh -it's me-It's my dad- can I answer?

PANCH

I'm afraid we can't let you do that.

OLIVE

Well Miss Peretti, maybe you could answer to tell him I made the finals. (*confidentially*) And that I need the twenty-five dollar entrance fee!

*Panch tries to disallow it.*

RONA

Let's allow it this once.

Miss Ostrovsky's line Rona speaking. Just one minute, Logainne.

*as Rona takes the call, Schwarzy begins to complain*

SCHWARZY

Doesn't anybody else here care about the rules!?

*Barfee and Panch both raise their hands.*

SCHWARZY

This bee is about as [well-organized as]

*(and seeing an opportunity she goes to the microphone and makes a political speech. The speech is re-written at least weekly, a topical ad-lib)*

SCHWARZY

*(weekly ad lib about interruption)*

*For example: This bee is as archaic as...the conclave process. You know, I've been reading about our new pope, Pope Benedict; and as a progressive, half Jewish biracial child of two gay fathers, I don't believe this pope has my best interest in mind.*

PANCH

Does anyone mind if we get back to spelling?

SCHWARZY

I've been waiting for my word.

PANCH

I gave you a word.

SCHWARZY

No you didn't.

PANCH

Didn't I give her a –

*KIDS/RONA/MITCH*

*No-*

PANCH

My apologies. Sluice.

*To increasingly ominous underscoring...*

SCHWARZY

*(maybe on her own she foregoes pronouncing this one)*

Sluice. May I have a definition?

PANCH

It's an artificial passage for water with a valve or gate for stopping and regulating flow.

SCHWARZY

And are there any alternate definitions?

PANCH

Yes- a channel to drain or carry off surplus water

SCHWARZY

Hm. Are there any alternate definitions?

PANCH

Yes it's a body of water pent up behind a floodgate.

SCHWARZY

Are there any alternate definitions?

PANCH

Why don't you quit stalling and spell the damn word! !

RONA

Principal Panch!

PANCH

Vice Principal Panch! Vice Principal! They won't let me be principal.

BARFEE

Gee, I wonder why.

SCHWARZY

*(very upset, over the rest)*

SLUICE. S-L-U-I-C-E. SLUICE!

RONA

That is correct. *(to Panch)* What is wrong with you?

*Ad-libs as Mitch pulls Panch off stage with Rona assisting him.  
[different productions have handled this differently—in one Panch collapses and is pulled off stage, in another Panch continues fit and has to be subdued, or Panch approaches Mitch to get him to do something and Mitch pulls Panch off in headlock]*

*Carl Dad comes on stage from in the audience as Olive goes to comfort Schwarzy. Carl Dad shoos Olive away, ad-libbing along lines of “Thanks Sweetie, I’ll take it from here. Can we have a little privacy please?”*

CARL

Breathe, Logainne. You’re okay, buck up *(as he pours a can of coke on the floor)* Oh that’s no good *(aside to Schwarzy)* No, no, let that dry.  
*(pulls her aside)* The foot, we have to disable the foot.

SCHWARZY

What foot?

CARL

The magic foot.

SCHWARZY

Wouldn’t that be wrong?

CARL

Do you want to win?

SCHWARZY

Yes, but I believe in ethical conduct

CARL

And isn’t having a magic foot an unfair *advantage*

SCHWARZY

I don’t have a magical foot.

CARL-DAD

Or a mother?

RONA

Can we have all parents in their seats please. This is not a soccer game.

SCHWARZY  
(to Olive)

You're lucky your parents are in India.

OLIVE

No only my mom is. My dad's coming from work.

PANCH

(as he returns, ad libs thanks to Mitch—eg Thanks Mitch, I appreciate the tough love and the juice box]

I apologize for that incident. In my defense I'd like to point out that I am lactose intolerant. Miss Ostrovsky.

OLIVE  
(to Rona)

What did my dad say?

RONA

Oh your dad says he's running late- and he'll discuss the entrance fee with you when he picks you up.

OLIVE

But did he say what time he was going to get here?

PANCH

Chimerical

OLIVE

What was the word?

PANCH

Chimerical.

OLIVE

Can I have a definition?

PANCH

It means unreal. imaginary. (*MUSIC CUE*) visionary. wildly fanciful. highly unrealistic  
*Olive sees an image of her mother- played by Rona*

RONA as OLIVE'S MOM

OOOH OOH OOH OOH OOH OOH  
OOOH OOH OOH OOH OOH OOH

OLIVE

IF I GO TO WASHINGTON  
WILL I BE ON MY OWN?  
BECAUSE IF I GO TO WASHINGTON  
WHO WILL BE MY CHAPERONE ?

OLIVE'S MOM  
WE ALWAYS KNEW YOU WERE A WINNER.  
WE SAW IT WHEN YOU SMILED.  
START FROM THE BEGINNING,  
WHEN YOU WERE A BEGINNER.  
YOU WERE THE PERFECT CHILD.

WE ALWAYS KNEW, WE ALWAYS KNEW, YOU WERE A CHAMPION.  
YOUR SADNESS FILLED MY ROOM.  
DEAR, IF YOU SHOULD FEEL MY GLOOM  
BLAME IT ON ME  
BLAME IT ON YOUR DADDILY AND MAMMILY  
CAUSE DEPRESSION RUNS IN OUR FAMILY.  
I-I-I LOVE YOU  
I-I-I LOVE YOU  
I LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU DEAR  
AND I SWEAR IT IS TRUE  
I LOVE YOU

OLIVE'S DAD (played by MITCH)  
I-I-I LOVE YOU.

OLIVE  
And my dad says.

OLIVE'S PARENTS  
I-I-I LOVE YOU  
I LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU BABY  
AND MAYBE IT'S TRUE:  
I LOVE YOU.

OLIVE  
I WROTE YOU A LETTER,  
HOW I FOUND THE SPELLING BEE SUCH FUN.  
MAMA, MAMA, MAMA,  
BUT YOU DIDN'T REACT.  
AND YOU NEVER ASKED ME  
IF I'D JOIN YOU IN THE BOMBAY SUN.  
MAMA, MAMA, MAMA,  
I HAD QUIETLY PACKED.

OLIVE con't...

WHEN ARE YOU RETURNING?  
I KNOW WE AGREED  
TELL ME WHAT YOU'RE LEARNING  
MA, I HAVE,  
OH GOD,  
THIS NEED...

I THINK DAD IS ANGRY, MA,  
AND I DO NOT KNOW WHAT TO DO.  
MAMA, MAMA, MAMA  
SHANTI, SHANTI, AND OM.  
I THINK HE TAKES OUT ON ME  
WHAT HE WANTS TO TAKE OUT ON YOU.  
MAMA, MAMA, MAMA,  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE HOME  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE HOME  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE  
WISH YOU WERE  
HOME---

OLIVE'S PARENTS  
WE ALWAYS KNEW YOU WERE A WINNER

OLIVE  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE HOME

OLIVE'S MOM  
A BATHING BEAUTY YOU

OLIVE  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE HOME

OLIVE'S DAD  
GOD, WE LOVED THE WAY YOU GREW,

OLIVE  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE HOME

DAD  
SINCE YOU WERE BORN

MOM  
OLIVE, WE COULDN'T BE PROUDER

PARENTS  
PLEASE LET ME SAY IT  
ONE TIME LOUDER.

OLIVE  
MAMA, MAMA, MAMA  
HOW I WISH YOU WERE HOME!

PARENTS  
I-I-I LOVE YOU.  
I-I-I LOVE YOU.  
I LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU BABY (DEAR)

MOM  
AND I SWEAR IT'S TRUE

DAD  
MAYBE IT'S TRUE

OLIVE'S PARENTS  
I LOVE YOU  
I LOVE YOU  
I LOVE YOU  
I LOVE EVERYTHING ABOUT YOU BABY (DEAR)

OLIVE  
MAMA  
I LOVE YOU  
MAMA MAMA MAMA

MOM  
AND I SWEAR IT'S TRUE

DAD  
MAYBE IT'S TRUE

OLIVE'S PARENTS  
I LOVE...

OLIVE  
Chimerical. C-H-I-M-E-R-I-C-A-L. Highly unrealistic. Wildly fanciful.

PANCH (*voice-over*)  
That is correct.

OLIVE AND PARENTS  
I LOVE YOU.

PANCH  
Mr. Barfee.  
(Barfee *shrugs*)



Crepuscle

PANCH

I'm sorry crep...?

BARFEE

Crepuscle

PANCH

Crepuscle. One moment please.

BARFEE

William. William.

SCHWARZY

*Schwarzy tries to get Barfee's attention to warn him about sticky spot on floor. Rona and Panch shush Schwarzy*

BARFEE

*(with the magic foot)* C. R. E. P. Crep. U. S.

*He slips on the sabotage substance.*

Ew. There's something sticky. I'll take it from after the crep.

*He tries again*

U. S.

*He's stuck again.*

PANCH

We need a spelling now.

BARFEE

Can I wash off my foot first?

RONA

Now, William.

BARFEE

*(reluctantly)* May I have a definition?

PANCH

It means twilight.

BARFEE

Twilight. *(reluctantly)* Can you use it in a sentence?

RONA

*(answers without thinking before Panch can get his sentence in;  
basically it's the story of her own life)*

“She thought she was walking into the dawn, but it turned out—it was the crepuscule.”

BARFEE

Ew. C-R-E-P...U ? *(spells rest of word quickly thinking he's missed on the “u”)*  
S-C-U-L-E. Crepuscule

PANCH

That is correct.  
Miss Schwarzandgrubeniére

BARFEE

*(to woman he's selected in audience)*

Mom, I did it without the foot!

SCHWARZY

*(cleans up coke)*

I'd just like to say, Carl Dad-I can do this on my own.

PANCH

VUG.

SCHWARZY

Vug? That's the whole word? Vug?

PANCH

Vug.

SCHWARZY

*(as she writes word on her arm)*

Language of origin?

PANCH

Cornish dialect, a Latin derivative

SCHWARZY

Cornish. That's like English with Dutch influence. *(continues writing on arm)*

Vug. V-u-g-g-h-e. Vugghe

*ding*

PANCH  
I'm sorry, the correct answer is V-U-G. Vug.

SCHWARZY  
So simple?

PANCH  
So simple.

SCHWARZY  
I'm so sorry, dads. I overcomplicated.  
I HOPE YOU STILL LOVE ME, AMERICA.  
AMERICA, I GAVE IT MY BEST TRY.  
IF YOU STILL DON'T LOVE ME AMERICA  
I UNDERSTAND WHY.  
YOU HATE LOSERS.  
SO DO I.  
I'M A LOSER SO GOODBYE.

MITCH  
GOODBYE

SCHWARZY  
GOODBYE

MITCH  
GOODBYE

SCHWARZY  
GOODBYE

MITCH  
GOODBYE

MITCH & SCHWARZY  
GOODBYE.

*She collapses into Mitch who gently escorts her off.  
The doors slam behind them.*

RONA  
How exciting! (*MUSIC CUE*)

PANCH

Will the final two spellers please step forward.

--Now the rules state that we continue spelling until someone misses a word- at that point, the final speller must spell the next word correctly in order to win the bee.

RONA

OH BOY!  
AND OH GIRL!  
ONLY TWO REMAIN.  
I FEEL JOY BUT I ALSO FEEL PAIN  
BECAUSE I KNOW WHAT'S COMING.  
JOY NEVER COMES FOR FREE.

IN A MOMENT HE OR SHE  
WILL ENTER SPELLING HISTORY,  
FEELING TRIUMPH AND GLEE.  
IN THIS MOMENT OF PERFECT SYZYGY.  
I HEAR TRIUMPHANT SOUNDS OF TYMPANI

*(here she's at last telling the truth)*

IT'S MY FAVORITE MOMENT OF THE BEE

PANCH

Mr. Barfee

*underscoring and spelling sequence begin*

Coryza

BARFEE

Coryza.

PANCH

Ilspile

OLIVE

Ilspile.

PANCH

Zoonosis

BARFEE

*(for Olive's benefit)*

Zoonosis. Yes, of course. Does that happen to be the longest word that can be turned upside down and it's still the same word?

PANCH

Fabaceae.

OLIVE

*(for Barfee's benefit)*

Fabaceae. And does that happen to be the longest word that can be played on a musical instrument?

PANCH

Chromataphore.

BARFEE

Chromatophore. And if you were to rearrange the letters of that word, would you be able to form the phrase: "Mr. Pooh ate a roc"?

*As Panch and Rona look thoroughly baffled ("Is that a phrase?")  
Olive and Barfee go head to head*

OLIVE

"Or, Cheap hoot, Mr."

BARFEE

"Hop home carrot"

OLIVE

"Rap home cohort."

PANCH

Mr. Barfee. Please spell Astrobleme.

OLIVE

I'M LOVING EVERY MINUTE.

BARFEE

Astrobleme.

OLIVE

WHO KNEW I HAD THIS THIRST?

BARFEE

A-S-T



OLIVE  
I WON'T COME IN  
SECOND  
SECOND  
I WON'T COME IN ....  
SECOND

BARFEE  
SECOND  
I WON'T COME IN  
SECOND  
SECOND  
I WON'T COME IN ...

CHORUS  
OOH OOH  
AAH AAH  
AHH  
AHH  
AHH  
AHH

OLIVE  
Elanguescence.  
E-l-a-n-g-u-e-s-s-e-n-c-e.  
Elanguescence.

CHORUS  
WHO WILL COME IN  
FIRST AND  
WHO WILL COME IN ...  
SECOND, SECOND

*Ding*

*Music stops*

PANCH  
I'm sorry the correct spelling is E-l-a-n-g-u-e-s-c-e-n-c-e. That's incorrect.

RONA  
Now remember no speller can win on another speller's mistake. Mr. Barfee must spell the next word correctly to take the Putnam bee.

PANCH  
Are you ready, William?

BARFEE  
Yes, thank you Doug, I am ready.

PANCH  
Then please spell Weltanschauung.

BARFEE  
Yes of course, Weltanschauung.  
Meaning one's personal perspective, your philosophy, the way you look at the world?

PANCH  
That is correct

BARFEE

I know.

W... E...L...T...A...N...S...C...H...A...U-

CHORUS

WHO WILL COME IN

WHO WILL COME IN

WHO WILL COME IN

*Etc.*

BARFEE

*(turns and notices Olive) You...*

*It's really the first time he's thought about how someone else might feel.*

*[you...you]*

*He hears music.*

FANTASY BALLET: *Barfee and Olive dance*

CHORUS

DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO DOO

DOO DOO DOO DOO

AHHHH!

AHHHH!

DOO DOO DOO

DOO DOO DOO

AH AH AH AH

AH AH AH AH

AH!

AH!

MMM MMM

MMM MMM

*Barfee and Olive stop dancing*

OLIVE

CHORUS

BARFEE

I FEEL I'M IN MY GLORY,

MAMA I MADE A FRIEND.

I'LL LOSE AND THAT'S  
THE STORY,

BUT WE ARE EQUALS MA  
WHERE NEITHER  
CONDESCENDS.

BUT SHOULD I COME IN  
SECOND?

BUT SHOULD I COME IN  
SECOND?

IS SECOND FOR ME ?

MY FEARS WERE ODIIOUS



<p>OLIVE con't...</p> <p>I AM I AM FINE WITH SECOND. I CAN LIVE WITH SECOND YES, SECOND I WILL COME IN SECOND.</p>	<p>CHORUS con't...</p> <p>WHO WILL WHO WILL COME IN SECOND SECOND OOH OOH OOH</p>	<p>AND FECUND. BARFEE con't...</p> <p>AND SHOULD I THROW THE BEE? WOULD I BE HAPPY SECOND? IF FOR EVER EVER EVER I WAS ALWAYS STUCK IN SECOND WILL I COME IN SECOND WILL I COME IN ...</p>
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CHORUS

OOOH OOH OOH OOH

BARFEE

S-C-H-A-U

*(he again looks over at Olive on the you)*

OLIVE

It's okay, Barf

BARFEE

U-N-G. Weltanschauung

PANCH

We have a winner!

<p style="text-align: center;">RONA</p> <p>CHAMPION! JUST SENSATIONAL REPRESENTATIONAL</p>	<p style="text-align: center;">CHORUS</p> <p>CHAMPION! CHAMPION! CHAMPION!</p>
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ALL

AT THE PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING  
BEE!

PANCH

On behalf of our sponsors "The Putnam Optometrists"- *(indicating banner)* "you've got to see us to believe us" *(if there is no banner to indicate, he can say "of whom I am a client")*- we'd like to present you, William Morris Barfay, with this two hundred dollar savings bond toward your future education

BARFEE

I've worked so hard for this moment...*(almost overcome but rallies)*  
All my life I have only been able to breathe through one nostril and today is no exception!

*PANCH is the only one to notice OLIVE in background looking very sad.*

PANCH

*(making this up on the spot)*

And this year there's also a runner-up prize.

RONA

*(really didn't know)*

There is?

PANCH

*(clearly making it up as he goes along)*

Yes, as you know, if for any reason the winner cannot fulfill his duties as Putnam county spelling champ, the Runner Up must step in and assume all spelling responsibilities, so this year our sponsors are also offering a cash prize of twenty-five dollars to the second-place finisher. *(after speaking, takes cash out of his wallet and gives it to Olive, bringing her forward from background)* -Nice going, Miss Ostrovsky.

OLIVE

Thank you!  
I can't believe it! Thank you!

*Olive is really happy about this- she does not catch on to it being gift from Panch- though Rona does.*

OLIVE

Miss Peretti - I can pay the fee now !

RONA

*(to Olive)*

Very good.  
*(and looking at Panch in a whole new way)* Very good.

BARFEE

*(echoes)*

Very good.

*PANCH and RONA walk off together*

OLIVE  
*(to Barfee, at end of line)*

Good bee.

BARFEE

Thanks Ostrovsky. You too.

OLIVE

Well, I made a dumb mistake on elanguescence

BARFEE

No no, not really – *(lying)* I wasn't sure how to spell that one either

OLIVE

Yeah right.

BARFEE

Yeah I totally knew how to spell that word.

OLIVE

Hey Barf

BARFEE

Yeah?

OLIVE

Congratulations

*Olive gives Barfee a big hug*

BARFEE  
*(as they hug)*

oh. of course.

*(other kids come out and make fun of the hug as epilogues begin. Barfee sometimes adds a “shut up” to them in response)*

*Each character delivers his or her own epilogue—and over the course of the epilogue, the children transform into the adults they will later become, delivering the end of the speech as their grown-up selves.)*

## EPILOGUES

### PANCH

Vice Principal Panch found a new passion in life. Her name was Rona Lisa Peretti. After courting her tirelessly for over two years, she took out a restraining order on him. Still, he was grateful for the opportunity to experience love.

### RONA

*(the first part a reference to Panch)*

Rona Lisa Peretti *left* Putnam county for a stretch, and traveled the world to bring competitive spelling to the less fortunate. She hosted national bees in Latvia, Sweden, and the Republic of Guinea-Bissau, where she fell in love with an indigenous cashew farmer and became one of the top realtors in that country.

### MITCH

Mitch Mahoney discovered a new talent at the Putnam bee, so he made his community service lifelong, comforting eliminated spellers and frustrated educators across the nation. Over the years he remained in touch with scores of people he had comforted:

### ALL

Dear Mitch  
*(first line of letters)*

### CHIP

Chip Tolentino made it through adolescence, and in the course of time came to appreciate his erection. –As did many others.

### MARCY

Marcy Park continued to explore the freedom of not living up to expectations. She later wrote a book called Not Living Up to Expectations. It did not live up to expectations. She is very happy.

### CONEYBEAR

Leaf Coneybear has cats.

### SCHWARZY

Logainne Schwartzandgrubenierre won the 31st annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, on her 7<sup>th</sup> try and final year of eligibility. She went on to become Secretary of Education under President Chastity Bono! Her speech therapy was completely successful.

### BARFEE

William Morris Barfée studied for Nationals with his new friend Olive Ostrovsky. He came in 42<sup>nd</sup>. (Top 50) In later years he grew up to be incredibly handsome and to gain fame and notoriety for his pioneering efforts in the combined scientific fields of psychiatry and podiatry, otherwise known as: poschietry.

OLIVE

Olive Ostrovsky reenacted the entire bee for her father in the car ride home. She grew up to be a loving and *attentive* parent-- and the host of her own radio talk show, where every year she interviewed the runner up of the Putnam County spelling bee.

COMPANY

AT THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL  
PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

SPELLERS

WE GREW UP UNDENIABLY

BOYS

AND LOOK OUR HAIR IS THINNING.

COMPANY

OUR PAST  
CAUGHT UP WITH US AT LAST.  
IT WAS A VERY NICE  
VERY NICE  
VERY VERY VERY NICE  
VERY NICE VERY NICE  
VERY VERY VERY NICE  
VERY NICE  
BEGINNING.

RONA/MITCH

25<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL

COMPANY

25<sup>th</sup> ANNUAL  
PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE.

*The company bows.*

COMPANY

GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE...