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!

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

SCHWARZ*Y

Ms. Peretti!

RONA
And, our youngest competitor, Logainne SchwarzandGrubeniere,

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

CONEYBEAR

AT THE 25TH ANNUAL
PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING GAME (Bee!)
I’LL STAND WHEN THEY ANNOUNCE MY NAME:

RONA

Leaf Coneybear.

CONEYBEAR

AND TRY TO KEEP FROM SHAKING.

SCHWARZ*Y

ALAS
HIS SHAKING WILL NOT PASS

CONEYBEAR, CHIP, RONA AND SCHWARZ*Y

‘CAUSE IT’S A VERY BIG
VERY FRAUGHT-
SIMPLE BUT IT’S NOT-
IT’S A VERY BIG UNDERTAKING.

*Barfée enters, stumblingly*

RONA

*(with some surprise and admiration)*
Returning after last season’s tragic setback: William *Barfée*.

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 25TH 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.

CONEYBEAR

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 25TH 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
VER Y NICE, VER Y VER Y NICE

ALL
VER Y NICE, VER Y NICE
VER Y VER Y NICE
VER Y 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?)

CONYBEAR
(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—

CONYBEAR
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 9th 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

MAY ASK QUESTIONS

MAY ASK QUESTIONS

ABOUT THE WORD'S PRONUNCIATION OR DEFINITION,

DEFINITION

USE IN A SENTENCE,

IN A SENTENCE

AND LANGUAGE OF ORIGIN

LANGUAGE OF ORIGIN.

IF YOU START TO SPELL A WORD YOU MAY START OVER,

IF YOU MISSPELL A WORD

MISSPELL A WORD

WE WILL RING
YOU WILL RING
THE BELL
(rings bell)
AND THE COMFORT COUNSELOR

Mitch Mahoney

MORPHOLOGY

ALL
MORPHOLOGY

WILL ESCORT YOU OFF STAGE!

So, is that understood spellers?

YES

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 Schwartzandfrubenberg.
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


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)

Capybara

CONEYBEAR

What?
Your word is Capybara.

Is that a word?

That’s a word, yes.

No way- what does it mean?

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

Awesome. What else can I ask?

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

Oh- can you use it in a sentence?

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.”

Wow, that didn’t help at all!

Are you ready to spell the word Mr. Coneybear?

No, but it was fun to come here-
(to family in aud) hi guys-my whole family’s here which is really…

That is correct.
CONEBEAR
It is?
I can’t believe it.

PANCH
Miss Ostrovsky

CONEBEAR
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 CLEANSES 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 NIETZSCHE’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 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.

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

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.

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

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

Omphaloskepsis.

CHIP

PANCH
Yes.
CHIP
Can that also be pronounced “omPHAloskepsis”?

PANCH
It can. It would be wrong.

CHIP

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 PANDEMONIUM

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
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.

Schwarz 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 Schwarz- 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

good. siphon.

CARL

s-i-p-h-o-n

SCHWARZY
good. Cystitis

S-

No. Think.

C-

good

i-

CARL

SCHWARZY

CARL

SCHWARZY

CARL

SCHWARZY

CARL

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CARL

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

PANCH

We need a spelling, please, Logainne.

SCHWARZY

(struggling through her sad memory)


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?

CONEBEAR
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

CONEBEAR
EVERYONE KEEPS YELLING

FAMILY

DUMB KID

CONEBEAR
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. 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

OLIVE

flagellate- um- that’s a verb right?

PANCH

Yes.

OLIVE

May I have a definition?

PANCH

I need to ask you to speak clearly into the microphone

OLIVE

Sorry.

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.

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.

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

PANCH
Rabbit stew, that’s correct.

BARFEE
My old friend. One moment please.

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

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 pfef
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

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

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, MAGIC FOOT!

ALL
FOOT!

(Playoff music)

COMPANY
MAGIC FOOT 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

RONA

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

PANCH

Miss Park, your word is QAIMAQAM

PARK


That’s remarkable.

And correct.

RONA

Miss Park is all business

PANCH

MARCY (genuinely surprised to hear this is thought of her)

I am not.

PANCH

Mr. Tolentino

CHIP [generally VOICEOVER] (caught up in his fantasy)

Marigold...
Marigold Coneybear...
That’s a really lovely sweater, Marigold...

PANCH

Chip. Chip. Chip!

CHIP
Sorry – is it my turn to spell?

Yes!

A rare break in concentration from Mr. Tolentino

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

Why would you want to do that?

I’d rather not say?

You can either take your turn now or forfeit.

I’ll take my turn now

Another excellent decision by the incumbent

The word is: TITTUP.

definition please

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


ding
PANCH
I’m sorry, the correct spelling is T-I-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...

RONA

GOOD LORD,
THAT’S WHAT’S SWELL ABOUT SPELLING BEES.
I AM FLOOURED
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, 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

NOT YOUR MOTHER!
OOOOHHHH

PRAYER

ALL

GOODBYE GOODBYE.

MITCH

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

GOOD!
BYE!

MITCH

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?

ERECITION,
ERECITION,
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 Barflee. Rona grabs Chip and pulls him offstage. Chip and Barflee shout ad-libs at each other as Chip exits [eg: Barflee-“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:

CONEBEAR
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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>SCHWARZY</th>
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<td>BE SMART, BE COOL</td>
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</table>

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)

PANCH
Correct. Mr. Coneybear. Please spell vulpine
CON\-\EYBEAR
(to faster beat, fast-motion trance)
Vulpine. V-u-l-p-i-n-e. Vulpine
Correct. Miss Ostrovsky
Hallux.

continues to speed up, fast mo:
Hallux?
Hallux.
h-a-l-l-u-x hallux.
Correct. Mr. Barfee.
It’s Barfee.

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
That’s correct.
I know.
Miss Park. Rooibos

PARK
(extremely sped up, she spells correctly)
Rooibos

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

  Back to fast speed

PANCH: That is correct.

BARFEE: I know.

PANCH: Miss SchwarzandGrubeniere, 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

I’m sorry, that is incorrect.

gasp—It’s Coneybear left up by mic

PANCH

It is?

CONEYBEAR
PANCH

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

CONEBEAR

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.

Antihistamine

PANCH

BARFEE

Luck of the draw. One moment please.
Antihistamine Mr. Panchee
Doug Panch.

Will Barfée

Miss Park

Miss Park speaks five languages.

**MARCY**
*(she’s had it with these comments)*

No I don’t

Don’t you?

No.

**RONA**

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

**MARCY**

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?

**RONA**
*(checking list)*

No, it doesn’t say that.

**MARCY**

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

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 RESHIEPE 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
OHH
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?
Marcy?

I knew you were Asian! Hi!

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

Hi

How are you?

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

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

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

(convinced, she decides to take this seriously and asks something she really would like to know)

Jesus... I was wondering what would happen if I didn’t win today.

What do you think would happen?

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

Of course not- but Marcy? I also won’t be disappointed with you if you win.

Beat as she looks confused

You’re saying it’s up to me then?

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

AAAAAHHHHHHH!

MARCY
Ding (MUSIC CUE)

MARCY
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!

GIRLS
SHE BLEW THAT WORD
PRAISE JESUS!

MITCH approaches MARCY.
SHE leaps joyfully into his arms and HE carries her offstage

Three spellers remain!

RONA

PANCH

Miss Schwarzandgrubeniere.

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-
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.

And are there any alternate definitions?

SCHWARZY

Yes- a channel to drain or carry off surplus water

Hm. Are there any alternate definitions?

PANCH

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

Are there any alternate definitions?

SCHWARZY

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

Principal Panch!

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

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-lib 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?

Chimerical

PANCH

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

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
DAD
HOW I WISH YOU WERE HOME
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)

MOM
AND I SWEAR IT’S TRUE

DAD
MAYBE IT’S TRUE

OLIVE’S PARENTS
I LOVE…

OLIVE

PANCH (voice-over)
That is correct.

OLIVE AND PARENTS
I LOVE YOU.

PANCH
Mr. Barfee.

(Barfee shrugs)
Crepuscule

I’m sorry crep...?

Crepuscule

Crepuscule. One moment please.

William. William.

*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.*

We need a spelling now.

Can I wash off my foot first?

Now, William.

*BARFEE*  

(*reluctantly*) May I have a definition?

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 Schwarzandgrubeniere

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

So simple?

So simple.

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

underscor...
Fabaceae.

PANCH

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

PANCH

Chromataphore.

BARFEE

Chromataphore. 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

to think that I might win it
is astounding news
and I’m about to burst.

barfee

R-O Astro

OLIVE

how wonderful it feels
to stand so close to first.

barfee

B-L-E

OLIVE

I’ll make it happen
--and not as previously reckoned
cause I will not come in second!
i hate to come in second
yes I do yes I do yes I do yes I do
I will not come in second.

barfee

M-E. Astrobuleme.

Panch

Correct. Miss Ostrovsky. Elanguescence.

Olive ostensibly asks pronunciation and language of origin questions during below

barfee

Am I a red sock or a Yankee
who will come in second
people are scared of me
and no one really likes me;
i won’t come in second.
Hey Olive, don’t think I’m distracted
by your eyes and your smile and your hairdo
oh the things I do not dare do;
my fears are odious and fecund.
you will not outrank me.
i won’t wave my hankie
OLIVE | BARFEE | CHORUS
--- | --- | ---
I WON’T COME IN | I WON’T COME IN | OOH OOH
SECOND | SECOND | AAH AAH
SECOND | SECOND | AHH
I WON’T COME IN …. | I WON’T COME IN … | AHH
SECOND | SECOND | AHH

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

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-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.

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-

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 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,

BUT SHOULD I COME IN SECOND?

MAMA I MADE A FRIEND.

BUT SHOULD I COME IN SECOND?

I'LL LOSE AND THAT'S THE STORY,

IS SECOND FOR ME?

BUT WE ARE EQUALS MA WHERE NEITHER CONDESCENDS.

MY FEARS WERE ODIOUS
OLIVE con’t…
I AM
I AM FINE WITH SECOND.
I CAN LIVE WITH SECOND
YES, SECOND
I WILL COME IN SECOND.

CHORUS con’t…
WHO WILL
WHO WILL
COME IN
SECOND
OOH
OOH

BARFEE con’t…
AND SHOULD I THROW
THE BEE?
WOULD I BE HAPPY
SECOND?
I WAS ALWAYS STUCK IN
SECOND
WILL I COME IN SECOND
WILL I COME IN …

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!

RONA
CHAMPION!
JUST SENSATIONAL
REPRESENTATIONAL

CHORUS
CHAMPION!
CHAMPION!
CHAMPION!

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 Perretti 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.

CONEBEAR
Leaf Coneybear has cats.

SCHWARZY
Logainne Schwartzandgruberpierre won the 31st annual Putnam County Spelling Bee, on her 7th
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
42nd. (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: poschiety.
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 25TH 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
25th ANNUAL

COMPANY
25th ANNUAL
PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE.

The company bows.

COMPANY
GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE, GOODBYE...