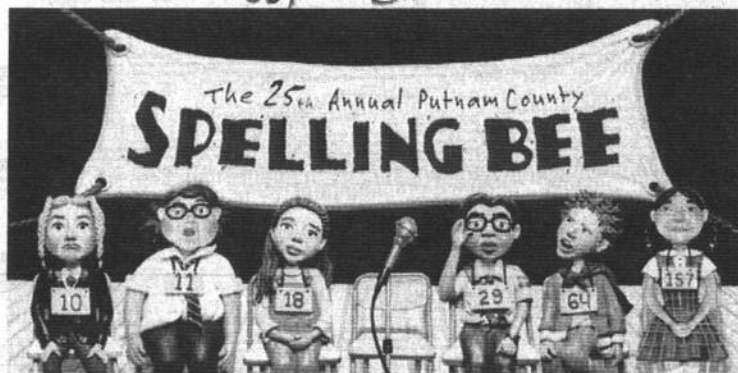


STAGE MANAGER SCRIPT

Lindsey Zimmell



Music and Lyrics by
William Finn

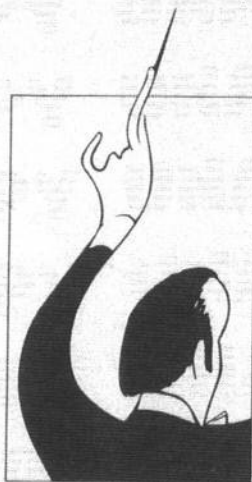
Book by
Rachel Sheinkin

Conceived by
Rebecca Feldman

Additional Material by Jay Reiss

Originally Directed on Broadway by **James Lapine**

Originally produced on Broadway by
David Stone, James L. Nederlander, Barbara Whitman, Patrick Catullo,
Barrington Stage Company, Second Stage Theatre



**MUSIC THEATRE
INTERNATIONAL**

AUTHORS' NOTE

Spelling Bee is designed to feel newly created with each performance, and to belong to the community that presents it. The involvement of audience volunteers allows for adaptability and surprise, so that no two performances are exactly alike. We love that it is alive in this way. At the same time, because it is a musical, because it tells a specific story of young people at a turning point in their lives – and of course because if performance time drags on everyone can quickly go from having a great time to hating the show – more is scripted than audiences may realize.

So this text contains elements meant to support the balancing act of the scripted and seemingly unscripted. The actors who've performed the play night after night are the ones who truly figured out how the adaptable elements work best. Appendices in the back of the script give guides to "ad-libs," which have been added to by several casts, but the standard developed and perfected by the original Broadway actors – Jay Reiss as Vice Principal Panch, Lisa Howard as Rona Lisa Perretti, and Sarah Saltzberg as Logainne Schwartzandgrubenniere.

All of the original actors had a lot to do with what the script became, so as you continue the tradition, give credit in your hearts to a few names not on the title page, including Dan Fogler, Jesse Tyler Ferguson, Celia Keenan Bolger, Deborah Craig, Jose Llana, Derrick Baskin, and members of the Farm.

We all hope you enjoy making it yours. At the same time, be aware that the show is like a well-oiled machine, which needs certain things to happen at certain times. Stick to the script and you should be rewarded.

The authors would also like to acknowledge our collaborators from Barrington to Broadway, including Dan Knechtges (choreographer), Beowulf Boritt (set designer), Jen Caprio (costume designer) and Vadim Feichtner and Carmel Dean, (music directors), whose input is felt in the script and score.

In choosing audience volunteers, it's important look to for people who do not want to ham it up. We highly discourage selecting actors or comedians – you are looking for your most "normal" citizens, people who would not normally seek the spotlight, but can go along with good humor as activity takes place around them. It is also of course nice to have a diversity of age, gender, and physical type in audience volunteers if possible. Volunteer #4 (who gets the word "cow") for example, is often a child. One child is generally enough. The audience roots for the volunteers as representatives of themselves on stage, so it's important that they be that – simply themselves.

In past productions, wranglers have approached unassuming looking audience members before the show and asked them simply whether they are good spellers. Those who respond positively and who have not yet seen the show – and of course who are open to

participating— are further interviewed to weed out the drunk, loony, and those prone to try to be funny, and four are selected to participate as volunteers in the bee. The volunteers are told above all not to act, and no matter what happens, to ask for a word's definition, and then for its use in a sentence. They are helped to anticipate when they will be called and how they will reach the stage.

Although there is no chance an audience volunteer can win the bee, they are not told this, but told simply to try to win, to do their best to spell each word they are given. During the show the actors playing Panch and Rona will learn more about the behavioral patterns and natural appeal of each at the microphone and will slyly select which audience volunteer will be the last standing. Inevitably, the more the volunteers are simply themselves, doing their best to spell the words given (always asking first for definition and sentence), the more they emerge as the stars of the bee.

CHARACTER LIST

THE SPELLERS

(in order of appearance)

CHIP TOLENTINO [actor also plays JESUS]

The reigning spelling champion of Putnam County, relatively athletic and social, he expects things to come easily to him. Lately though, he's been going through some weird changes, and things are slipping out of his control. (Be aware when casting his solo requires him to sing a lot of high notes a lot of times.)

LOGAINNE SCHWARTZANDGRUBENNIERE

Younger than most bee participants, she is driven by internal and external pressure—but above all by a desire to win to make her two fathers (from whom she takes her combined last name) proud. She lisps, is a little uncomfortable in her body, has some tics, but still manages to strike a strong presence with her political awareness and keen sense of justice. Having drilled words for hours a day, she is aware of everything that passes in the room.

LEAF CONEYBEAR [actor also plays CARL DAD]

A second alternate, he never expected to compete here today. Home-schooled with his many siblings, everything about this public bee is an adventure for him, from meeting the other kids to showing off his homemade clothing, to each moment of unexpected attention. He may have severe Attention Deficit Disorder but delights in his own wandering focus. Leaf doesn't expect to win—or even to spell one word correctly—but he finds absolutely everything incredibly amusing. His mother has made him wear his protective helmet to the bee.

WILLIAM BARFEE

Has a host of health problems and a lot to prove. Loud and combative as a defensive posture, he is the fat kid who becomes a bully to avoid being picked on (though he often gets picked on anyway so gets into a lot of fights). His parents are divorced, his father remarried to a much younger woman; and William does not expect kindness from anyone but his mother. So friendship takes him by surprise. Still, he's noticed on the spelling circuit for his remarkable technique—spelling words out on the floor with his foot. Taken out of competition last year because of an ill-timed allergic reaction, he's here for vindication. The journey he doesn't expect is one of coming to care about someone else—when he sees outside his own needs for perhaps the first time, it shakes him fundamentally.

MARCY PARK

The ultimate over-achiever, Marcy has never been given another option. She comes from a family where excellence is expected and so simply produced. A parochial school student, she assumes God, too, expects perfection. She sees herself as a mass of problems but she keeps them to herself. Having moved often because of her parents' work, she knows she can beat the local competition. Her many talents include piano, dance, martial arts, baton twirling, and/or whatever special gifts you can find in your casting pool.

OLIVE OSTROVSKY

A word lover, Olive has a fairly quiet life. An only child with often-absent parents, Olive spends a lot of her time alone. She fills some of that time reading the dictionary – the words bring her comfort, as does the idea of the vastness of the world the book contains. During the first half of the bee, she often peers into the audience to see if her father, who is delayed at work, has made it yet. She starts enormously shy, and shyly blossoms.

THE ADULTS

(in order of appearance)

RONA LISA PERRETTI [Actor also plays OLIVE's MOM in fantasy]

Putnam's long-time spelling bee hostess, a local realtor, and 3rd annual Putnam County spelling champion. This is the Rona's day to be queen. From her perspective she keeps the bee running smoothly, upholds protocol, and conveys crucial information to the audience. Her interest in the competition is unflagging and drives it forward. She thinks of this as a complex cerebral sporting event, and she wants the audience to understand every twist and turn. If anything, in her life in general, she has to minimize the importance of this event to her, embarrassed that her own championship moment remains such a highlight. A little concerned when the substitute word pronouncer arrives, she knows she has to step up her game to make the day a success.

VICE PRINCIPAL DOUGLAS PANCH of Lake Hemingway Dos Passos Junior High is frustrated with his life. He fell into education, less out of love than a general ability uncoupled to a particular passion. The drive of the young spellers is alien to him. He never found anything that important. Stuck in his current job, endlessly awaiting a promotion that isn't coming, he was not happy to get the call this morning that he was needed to substitute; but he starts the bee eager to do well, to redeem himself for past mistakes, and to impress the local hostess, Rona Lisa, who impressed him long ago.

MITCH MAHONEY [Actor also plays DAN DAD, and OLIVE's DAD in fantasy]

With a bouncer's physique and demeanor, Mitch appears an odd choice to be the bee's "comfort counselor," but it's part of his community service assignment. The outsider, who in a way gets to inhabit the audience perspective, he wonders about the wisdom of putting the kids through this at all. He has no idea how to offer comfort, but does increasingly find himself wishing he could find a way to make the kids feel better about losing, and perhaps place misspelling in wider perspective.

A NOTE ON DOUBLING

The doubling of roles as listed above was built into the original premise. However should you wish to accommodate a larger cast it is hypothetically possible to separate the following roles

SCHWARZY's FATHERS:

CARL GRUBENIERRE (CARL DAD, normally played by actor playing Leaf) Schwarzy's main trainer, the more intense and competitive of Schwarzy's fathers.

DAN SCHWARZ (DAN DAD, normally played by actor playing Mitch) the more laid back and ineffectual of Schwarzy's fathers.

LEAF'S MOM, DAD, and SIBLINGS (normally played by the spellers and audience volunteers as indicated in script) - all more academically gifted than Leaf, they are even more surprised than he is at his success.

OLIVE's MOM (normally played by actor playing Rona) A fantasy version of Olive's mom at her Ashram in India

OLIVE's DAD (normally played by actor playing Mitch) A fantasy version of Olive's dad coming to the bee from work.

JESUS CHRIST (normally played by actor playing Chip) Deity invoked by a speller in need.

MUSICAL NUMBERS

1. <i>The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee</i>	1
1a. <i>The Rules</i>	8
2. <i>My Friend The Dictionary</i>	14
3. <i>Pandemonium</i>	21
4. <i>I'm Not That Smart</i>	28
5. <i>Magic Foot</i>	33
5a. <i>Magic Foot Playoff</i>	35
6. <i>Pandemonium (Reprise)</i>	37
6a. <i>Chip Goodbye</i>	39
6b. <i>Rona Moment #2</i>	39
7. <i>Prayer Of The Comfort Counselor</i>	39
8. <i>Chip's Lament Intro</i>	42
9. <i>Chip's Lament</i>	42
10. <i>Woe Is Me</i>	45
11. <i>Spelling Montage</i>	49
11a. <i>I'm Not That Smart (Reprise)</i>	52
11b. <i>Coneybear Goodbye</i>	53
12. <i>I Speak Six Languages</i>	54
13. <i>Jesus</i>	56
13a. <i>Three Spellers Remain! Sluice!</i>	58
14. <i>The I Love You Song</i>	62
14a. <i>Crepuscle</i>	66
15. <i>Woe Is Me (Reprise)</i>	67
15a. <i>How Exciting</i>	68
15b. <i>Rona Moment #3</i>	68
16. <i>Second (Part 1)</i>	69
17. <i>Weltanschauung</i>	72
17a. <i>Olive & Barfee Pas De Deux</i>	72
17b. <i>Second (Part 2)</i>	73
18. <i>The Champion</i>	74
19. <i>Epilogues</i>	76
20. <i>Finale</i>	78
21. <i>Bows</i>	79
22. <i>Exit Music</i>	79
APP1. <i>Audience Goodbye #1</i>	<i>see vocal book</i>
APP2. <i>Audience Goodbye #2</i>	<i>see vocal book</i>
APP3. <i>Audience Goodbye #3</i>	<i>see vocal book</i>

SONGS BY CHARACTER

RONA

1. The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee	1
1a. The Rules	8
2. My Friend The Dictionary	14
5. Magic Foot	33
5a. Magic Foot Playoff	35
6b. Rona Moment #2	39
7. Prayer Of The Comfort Counselor	39
10. Woe Is Me	45
12. I Speak Six Languages	54
13. Jesus	56
15a. How Exciting!	68
15b. Rona Moment #3	68
16. Second (Part 1)	69
17. Weltanschauung	72
17a. Olive & Barfee Pas De Deux	72
17b. Second (Part 2)	73
18. The Champion	74
20. Finale	78
21. Bows	79

PANCH

1a. The Rules	8
6. Pandemonium (Reprise)	37
11. Spelling Montage	49
20. Finale	78
21. Bows	79

MITCH

1a. The Rules	8
3. Pandemonium	21
5. Magic Foot	33
5a. Magic Foot Playoff	35
6. Pandemonium (Reprise)	37
7. Prayer Of The Comfort Counselor	39
10. Woe Is Me	45
15. Woe Is Me (Reprise)	67
16. Second (Part 1)	69
17. Weltanschauung	72
17a. Olive & Barfee Pas De Deux	72
17b. Second (Part 2)	73
18. The Champion	74
20. Finale	78
21. Bows	79

OLIVE

1. The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee	1
1a. The Rules	8
2. My Friend The Dictionary	14
3. Pandemonium	21
5. Magic Foot	33
5a. Magic Foot Playoff	35
6. Pandemonium (Reprise)	37
6a. Chip Goodbye	39
7. Prayer Of The Comfort Counselor	39
10. Woe Is Me	45
11. Spelling Montage	49
12. I Speak Six Languages	55
13. Jesus	56
14. The I Love You Song	62
16. Second (Part 1)	69
17b. Second (Part 2)	73
20. Finale	78
21. Bows	79

BARFEE

1. The 25th Annual Putnam	
County Spelling Bee	.1
1a. The Rules	.8
3. Pandemonium	.21
5. Magic Foot	.33
5a. Magic Foot Playoff	.35
6. Pandemonium (Reprise)	.37
6a. Chip Goodbye	.39
7. Prayer Of The	
Comfort Counselor	.39
10. Woe Is Me	.45
11. Spelling Montage	.49
16. Second (Part 1)	.69
17b. Second (Part 2)	.73
20. Finale	.78
21. Bows	.79

CHIP

1. The 25th Annual Putnam	
County Spelling Bee	.1
1a. The Rules	.8
2. My Friend The Dictionary	.14
3. Pandemonium	.21
5. Magic Foot	.33
5a. Magic Foot Playoff	.35
6. Pandemonium (Reprise)	.37
9. Chip's Lament	.42
10. Woe Is Me	.45
16. Second (Part 1)	.69
17. Weltanschauung	.72
17a. Olive & Barfee Pas De Deux	.72
17b. Second (Part 2)	.73
18. The Champion	.74
20. Finale	.78
21. Bows	.79

SCHWARZY

1. The 25th Annual Putnam	
County Spelling Bee	.1
1a. The Rules	.8
2. My Friend The Dictionary	.14
3. Pandemonium	.21
5. Magic Foot	.33
5a. Magic Foot Playoff	.35
6. Pandemonium (Reprise)	.37
6a. Chip Goodbye	.39
7. Prayer Of The	
Comfort Counselor	.39
10. Woe Is Me	.45
11. Spelling Montage	.49
12. I Speak Six Languages	.54
13. Jesus	.56
15. Woe Is Me (Reprise)	.67
16. Second (Part 1)	.69
17. Weltanschauung	.72
17a. Olive & Barfee Pas De Deux	.72
17b. Second (Part 2)	.73
18. The Champion	.74
20. Finale	.78
21. Bows	.79

MARCY

1. The 25th Annual Putnam	
County Spelling Bee	.1
1a. The Rules	.8
3. Pandemonium	.21
5. Magic Foot	.33
5a. Magic Foot Playoff	.35
6. Pandemonium (Reprise)	.37
6a. Chip Goodbye	.39
7. Prayer Of The	
Comfort Counselor	.39
10. Woe Is Me	.45
11. Spelling Montage	.49
12. I Speak Six Languages	.54
13. Jesus	.56
16. Second (Part 1)	.69
17. Weltanschauung	.72
17a. Olive & Barfee Pas De Deux	.72
17b. Second (Part 2)	.73
18. The Champion	.74
20. Finale	.78
21. Bows	.79

CONEYBEAR

1. The 25th Annual Putnam	
County Spelling Bee	.1
1a. The Rules	.8
2. My Friend The Dictionary	.14
3. Pandemonium	.21
4. I'm Not That Smart	.27
5. Magic Foot	.33
5a. Magic Foot Playoff	.35
6. Pandemonium (Reprise)	.37
6a. Chip Goodbye	.39
7. Prayer Of The	
Comfort Counselor	.39
11. Spelling Montage	.49
11a. I'm Not That Smart (Reprise)	.55
16. Second (Part 1)	.69
17. Weltanschauung	.72
17a. Olive & Barfee Pas De Deux	.72
17b. Second (Part 2)	.73
18. The Champion	.74
20. Finale	.78
21. Bows	.79

OLIVE'S MOM

14. The I Love You Song	.62
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OLIVE'S DAD

14. The I Love You Song	.62
-------------------------	-----

DAN DAD

10. Woe Is Me	.45
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CARL DAD

10. Woe Is Me	.45
---------------	-----

DIRECTOR'S NOTES

One of the great pitfalls of adults (or teens) playing children is the urge to exaggerate mannerisms and speech. As in any portrayal, it is important to find the human who lives at the center of a character. The actor can find the energy and essence of a child without having to externalize gestural behavior. Also remember, the costume and hair design will do a great deal in helping the audience to forget that they are not really watching a child.

Much of the pacing of a performance of SPELLING BEE depends on Rona and Panch. The Volunteer spellers must not be allowed to determine the pace of the show. They must be encouraged to ask for the definition and sentence in a timely fashion, and must be told that there is a limit on how much time they can take to spell the word. In the case of "hammy" volunteers - or for that matter, boring ones - Panch and Rona must engineer their elimination as quickly as possible. (i.e. give them a warning that they are taking too much time; ding them out if they take too much time to spell; or on their next round, make sure to give them a word they cannot spell.)

Do not underestimate the importance of choosing the best possible volunteers. They must work as a group along with the cast. It is often good to choose two men and two men. An older person and a young person. A single person and a married person. A pregnant woman. Seek diversity in the selection process. In a sense, the volunteers must be carefully cast and also, once chosen, carefully directed before going on the stage. Encourage volunteers to be themselves and to believe that they can win the Bee. Furthermore, the actors in the musical must treat them as they would any other character on the stage.

Likewise, it falls on Panch and Rona to get the audience on the side of all the spellers. It is helpful that if there is a large group of people in the audience from say a church or senior citizen home; a school or organization; that one of the volunteers be chosen from their number and their group encouraged to cheer them on.

In introducing the Volunteer spellers, it is important that Rona and Panch not be unkind in their introductions. Make sure that gentle ribbing doesn't turn to character assassination. Nothing will turn an audience off faster.

The more local the character references, the better.

If the show is going to be performed with an intermission, it should fall on Page 42.

#8: The elimination of the final volunteer. Also, Chip's song can begin the second act of the show with him walking through the lobby or theatre as the audience settles in. And he can in fact actually sell candy!

(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.)

Miss Peretti. Please spell "Syzygy."

VOICE

Rona walks in & kisses trophy
D goes to mic

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

RONA

Spells @ mic

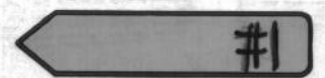
VOICE

We have a winner!

RONA

Thank you.
Thank you.
Thank you.

(hugs trophy)



#1 – The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee

(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.

Goes to
Rona
get plaque → chair

(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 Gets Plaque

And, our youngest competitor, Logainne SchwarzandGrubeniére,
(SCHWARZY 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:

Sits immediately

RONA
CB Stank

Leaf Coneybear.

CONEYBEAR

AND TRY TO KEEP FROM SHAKING.

SCHWARZY

ALAS
HIS SHAKING WILL NOT PASS

walk to chair
S sit

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 Barfee; there's an accent ague.

Grabs Plaque & sits

(MARCY enters. She's calm, you might even mistakenly think blasé.)

RONA

I'm not sure who this girl is—

MARCY

Marcy Park.

Sits

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 in

(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.~~

SIX FEET!

Olive runs to chair

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.

*Arm forward & leg
* Shake*

MARCY

WE HEAR THE WORD,

Go to neutral

SCHWARZY

WE BREATHE,

CONEYBEAR

WE WAIT.

ALL SPELLERS

UNLIKE IDIOTS WE IDEATE.

*Go into
line
in time*

RONA

(helpfully, in announcer mode)

To ideate is to form an image or idea, to think.

*Circle finger ear *stupid
point to head*

Don't prove til done

CONEYBEAR

AT THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

SCHWARZY

WE FEEL NO ANIMOSITY

ARM shake "hands"

SCHWARZY & OLIVE

AND YET OUR HEADS ARE SPINNING.

A, M, L shake in circle

BARFEE

WE ARE
THE SLIGHTEST BIT BIZARRE

Puppet between L & A

MARCY

BUT SINCE THE TIME IS NOW

M Go to chair

CONEYBEAR

HOLY COW

every one Go chair

SCHWARZY

WE SHALL TAKE A SOLEMN VOW
TO CONCENTRATE ON WINNING.

↓

ALL

WE CONCENTRATE ON WINNING.

*Puppets
Superhero
to stage right*

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

Hammock Swing

WE'RE LIVING OUT OUR DREAMS

(SCHWARZY simultaneously signs above in ASL.)

BOYS

WHICH IS A VERY NICE

LRLR

VERY NICE, VERY VERY VERY NICE

ALL

VERY NICE, VERY NICE

RLRLR

VERY VERY VERY NICE

VERY NICE

BEGINNING.

Center

RONA

TWENTY FIFTH ANNUAL

A Simba the puppet

KIDS

TWENTY FIFTH ANNUAL

hands up up up

ALL

PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

*up! *shake*

Hands get thrown on beat **RONA**

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

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)

[first and last name of volunteer one, volunteer two, volunteer three, volunteer four]

(RONA)

And I need to speak with Miss Olive Ostrovsky.

(OLIVE crosses to RONA as the volunteers are coming on stage.)

OLIVE *Walks to desk*

I'm Olive.

RONA

(pulls her gently aside)

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

H motions volunteers to empty seat

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.

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.

Cocky

MARCY

Don't worry, I'm not nervous.

SCHWARZY

(to Coneybear)

Have you ever been in an underground gymnasium before?

Rodeo house

(Line changes with theater configuration - 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 *H gets up to mic*

[Optional ad-libs as spellers get seated "Take your seats, please. Put your things away" only if additional time needed for everyone to settle in. The object is to keep things moving.]

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
Hand up

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.

**[Ad lib note: "fallen ill" = occasional ad lib space. Illness is sometimes replaced with a topical or local reference. For example, when Dick Cheney's hunting accident was in the news — "has been injured in a hunting accident"; in an area of heavy traffic — "is stuck in traffic on Route x"; but the default is also fine.]*

(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) *J arms around H*

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.

walks in

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

Well Get up

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. *Hands over Panch*

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.

PANCH

A SPELLER

SPELLERS

A SPELLER

Hand slightly up

PANCH

MAY ASK QUESTIONS

SPELLERS

MAY ASK QUESTIONS

PANCH

ABOUT THE WORD'S PRONUNCIATION OR DEFINITION,

SPELLERS

DEFINITION

Forward & back

PANCH

USE IN A SENTENCE,

SPELLERS

IN A SENTENCE

up to left

PANCH

AND LANGUAGE OF ORIGIN

SPELLERS

LANGUAGE OF ORIGIN.

Arch left to right

PANCH

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

PANCH & IMPATIENT SPELLERS

BUT THE SEQUENCES OF LETTERS ALREADY SPOKEN MAY NOT BE CHANGED.

Stand Be a Spaz

RONA

IF YOU MISPELL A WORD

Walk - hand on top

SPELLERS

MISPELL A WORD.

Sit Sad Kermit

RONA

WE WILL RING

SPELLERS

YOU WILL RING

RONA

THE BELL

(rings bell)

PANCH

Turn face stage right

RONA

AND THE COMFORT COUNS'LOR

M Stand

MITCH

Mitch Mahoney

ALL

MITCH MAHONEY

face mitch

RONA

WILL ESCORT YOU OFF STAGE!

PANCH

So, is that understood spellers?

SPELLERS

YES

Swing D sit

RONA

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

Walk to Mic

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.

PANCH

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

(SCHWARZY approaches microphone down center. As each speller makes their way to microphone RONA provides "color commentary," facts about the speller purportedly from their registration forms.)

RONA

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

A mics to mic

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 tracing the word on her arm with her finger.)

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. Actors rise as they assume roles.)

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!

Grabs phone & goes to mic

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. They also pull up the spellers to be "Paul" and other siblings. One audience volunteer is left seated. When this volunteer rises, she/he is told to sit back down again, providing a visual punchline to the sequence.)

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

BARFEE as LEAF'S DAD

What's up, Leaf?

LEAF

I made the county finals in the spelling bee!

(LEAF'S FAMILY laughs.)

SCHWARZY as MOM

Oh sweetheart, no, you came in third honey.

LEAF

Put phone in prop bag

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?

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 audience)

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

(as he returns to his seat)

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 -

#2 - My Friend The Dictionary

#2

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

around
her

I LOVE MY DICTIONARY
AND I LOVE THE INDENTED BORDER.

♀ □

□ ♀

Head
fit

EVERY WORD'S IN ALPHABETICAL ORDER
ERGO LOST THINGS ALWAYS CAN BE FOUND.

AND I WRAP MY HEAD AROUND *Step touch to stage left*
THE FACT THAT IN ONE BOOK

IS THE ENTIRE LANGUAGE OF OUR SPECIES -

WHICH IS A FAVORITE TERM OF NIETZCHE'S *Tap on hand*

WHO IS THE GREAT GRANDFATHER OF CHRISTINA RICCI'S. *head back laugh*
YES I JOKE, BUT THE WORDS IN THE DICTIONARY *spin L walk around*

ARE THE FRIENDS THAT I'LL HAVE FOREVER

MORE THAN THE FRIENDS I HAVE MADE IN SCHOOL

"Boanthropy"

(speaks spelling into her hand)

CHIP & 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.~~

Not political

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) *over word Dictionary*
BAH DAH DAH DAH DAH DAH DAH

Twin *Tease the puppets*

**** AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER INSTRUCTIONS ****

See **APPENDIX #1: Comments About Audience Volunteers** on page 82
and **APPENDIX #2: Audience Volunteer Words** on page 85

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.

PANCH

[Calls Audience Volunteer #1]

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 to 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, e.g, indigent, to try to ensure that three audience volunteers remain.

Whenever first audience volunteer gets out, the bell rings, PANCH gives correct spelling, 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 Barfee -

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]

AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER THREE

RONA

(Rona comment, e.g. for bald person)

Mr. Z is recovering from headlice.

PANCH

(This is a set slot, in that it must be an easy word. If a different word is desired, be sure it will still elicit protest. Easiest though is to keep this as scripted below.)

MEXICAN

CHIP, BARFEE & SCHWARZY

Mexican!

CHIP

That's so easy!

PANCH

Only the speller at the microphone may repeat the word.

(to audience 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 e.g: 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, they didn't know that - a serious contender)

ooh - Nationals! Top ten...

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.

leaves immediately

Slam-dunk from Park.

RONA

(to Marcy as they cross)

CHIP

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:)

PANCH

COW

#3 - Pandemonium

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. Best to treat these as set responses.)

Definition: It means a cow

Sentence: Please spell cow.

In the unlikely—and unfortunate—event that “cow” is misspelled, a version of the “Goodbye” is sung, and then Chip goes right into “Pandemonium”)



CHIP

MY OH MY

M SA hand up & down

OLIVE, CHIP

THAT WORD'S SO MORONIC.

CPB stand Left, right, Left

SCHWARZY-stand

I COULD CRY;

I WANT WORDS AS LAME!

PANCH

Mr. Coneybear

CONEYBEAR

SEMPER FI.

M S Arm moves out to Left
SWING

I FEEL SUPERSONIC.

PANCH

Spell “gerbil.”

(Coneybear spells “gerbil,” as song continues.)

MARCY

THAT IS WHY I DESPISE THIS GAME. *C Stands*

PANCH

That is correct. Mr. Tolentino.

CHIP & CONEYBEAR

Back LIFE IS RANDOM
Shake AND UNFAIR.
UP LIFE IS PANDEM-
ONIUM

facing & turning forward
Out right then left

PANCH

(to Chip)

"Staphylococcus"

ALL SPELLERS

THAT'S THE REASON WE DESPAIR *All Stand Bto chair*

CHIP

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM *Left to center*

CONEYBEAR

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM *Right to center*

CHIP

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM *Left to center*

BARFEE

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM *right to center & shake*

PANCH

"Broccoli"

CONEYBEAR

I KNEW THAT WORD. *Jump up head bob*

OLIVE

I KNEW THAT WORD. *head bob*

BARFEE

I KNEW THAT WORD. *head bob*

ALL SPELLERS

GODDAMN IT!

CHIP *All stand*

IT IS SUCH A CALAMITY. *Jump out → & sing*

All head ← → head shake

ALL SPELLERS

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?
THE BEST SPELLERS

Bring to audience

CHIP

DON'T NECESSARILY WIN.

ALL SPELLERS

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM.
LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM.

AJM Get in
LCB this position

(SPELLERS recruit audience volunteers into dance.)

MARCY

SET YOUR SIGHTS.
I AM ON A MISSION.

hanks
All in around
C

PANCH

Miss Park. "Antediluvian"

All look at C

SCHWARZY

WE HAVE RIGHTS.
(to audience volunteer)
We have rights.

Turn forward & stomp
on rights except C

THAT'S WHY WE COMPLAIN.

Get in line LAMBC

PANCH

, goes to mil
Mr. Barfee, "Halitosis"

BARFEE

DAMN LIFE BITES
BUT I LIKE COMPETITION

9 9 9 9 Hanks
Turn side with puppet out

PANCH

Miss Ostrovsky: "Schematic."

Walk right for 6 with arms in a circle

OLIVE

IN THESE LIGHTS
CAN YOU FEEL OUR PAIN

Go to seats

PANCH

Somebody spell, "crayon."

(Audience volunteers are engineered to dance in a circle alone, while other spellers point and laugh.)

MITCH

LIFE IS RANDOM

(MITCH)

AND UNFAIR
LIFE IS PANDEM-
ONIUM

up on
chairs

ALL SPELLERS

THAT'S THE REASON WE DESPAIR:

CHIP

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

Jump

MITCH

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

Jump

CHIP

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

Jump

BARFEE

LIFE IS PANDEMONIUM

Jump

(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

Bob heads

WHERE SHOULD WE BEGIN?

inc BCM AJL

THE BEST SPELLERS

Arm out up

CHIP

OTHER SPELLERS

WIN

up on
chairs

THEY DON'T WIN

THEY DON'T WIN

THEY DON'T WIN

LIFE IS PANDE-MONIUM

LIFE IS PANDE-MONIUM

MBC AOL



Switch directions
on 2nd

CHIP

DON'T NECESSARILY

BARFEE

NO THEY DON'T

Grab mic Elvis style

CHIP & OTHERS

LIFE IS RANDOM AND UNFAIR

JA audience faces

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 PANDEMONIUM

LIFE IS

PANDE, PANDE

PANDE, PANDE

PANDEMONIUM!



move
to seats
foot on chair

CHIP

YES IT IS!

run to chair

OTHER SPELLERS

YEAH!

Arm Out left shake & sit on beat

(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

CYSITTIS

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.

(CARL DAD 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 DAD

Segue.

SCHWARZY

S-E-G-U-E

CARL DAD

Good. Siphon.

SCHWARZY

S-I-P-H-O-N

CARL DAD

Good. Cystitis.

SCHWARZY

S-

CARL DAD

No. Think.

SCHWARZY

C-

CARL DAD

Good.

SCHWARZY

I-

CARL DAD

No! Logainne—are you concentrating?

SCHWARZY

Yes—

DAN DAD

Maybe it's time for a break?

CARL DAD

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

DAN DAD

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

CARL DAD

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

DAN DAD

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

CARL DAD

Daddy conference. Now.

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

Goes to a Mic

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 ?

(CONEYBEAR thinks about it, music starts)

#4 - I'm Not That Smart

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

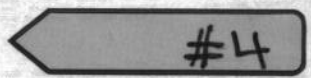
EVERYONE KEEPS YELLING

FAMILY

DUMB KID

CONEYBEAR

HOW COULD A FLEA
SUCH AS ME



(CONEYBEAR)

THINK HE'D BE
GOOD AT SPELLING?
HOW?

I DON'T KNOW. *Sad Kermit*

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) Free Swan)

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.

*pulls in
smile*

(CONEYBEAR)

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... *Superhero stance*

AT LEAST I'M FINALLY A PART. *neutral*

I FEEL MY HEART *hand on heart*

BEGIN TO SWELL

I LIKE - I LOVE - TO SPELL

I LIKE IT A LOT. *eat mic*

POSSIBLE AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER

(Actor playing PANCH is using his discretion on where to call audience volunteers depending on how many remain.)

Rona comments continue - along with spelling words, definition and sentences, and reaction to audience members 'dinged' out.)

PANCH

Miss Ostrovsky.

RONA

(surprised to discover this information as reading)

Miss Ostrovsky's mother is currently in India on a 9-month spiritual quest!

PANCH

FLAGELLATE

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) Starts to walk to desk

PANCH & RONA ad-lib... "no, don't walk towards us", "just pivot your head", "now speak into the microphone, now - no..." exerts to mic

OLIVE ends up twisted and confused.)

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.

Seeing this)

It's a hard age for girls.

CONEYBEAR

(CONEYBEAR falls off his chair.) Puppets on ground

I fell.

(CONEYBEAR puts 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! *WWE style & pause*

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. *UPD sheepish*

RONA

Though in my experience the girls are sometimes thinking:

SCHWARZY

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

RONA

While the boys are sometimes thinking:

BARFEE

I really don't know - am I good enough, or not? *Sheepish*

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?

**[Ad lib instruction: Actor playing Chip chooses audience member to indentify as Leaf's sister, Marigold. This is generally an attractive young woman seated close to the stage. The sweater description is adjusted as appropriate.]*

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 the last one standing and attempts to rig accordingly. The one who is

chosen to be retained is given a word with multiple acceptable answers, as others are eliminated on difficult words. Outcome as appropriate, including sung "Goodbye" variation if speller eliminated. No more than two should remain after this slot. Fewer is ok.)

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, a horrified BARFEE, in midst of allergic reaction in last season's competition)

BARFEE

Were there peanuts in the brownies?

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

(Return to present)

Goes to Knus

RONA

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

PANCH

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.

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!

Shake ← → surprise x2

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

A B M
 L C M Jozz J H

put Puppet down

(COMPANY joins in dance)

MAGIC FOOT
 MAGIC FOOT
 MAGIC FOOT

COMPANY
 Spin Left foot stamp
 Spin Right foot stamp
 Spin in circle with hands

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!

COMPANY

MAGIC FOOOOOOOT!
 MAGIC FOOOOOOOT!
 MAGIC FOOOOOOOT!

BARFEE

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

COMPANY

DO DO DO DO *Sit Strange*
DO DO DO DO DO
DO DO DO DO DO *feet up*
AHHHHHHH

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

MAGIC FOOT, MAGIC FOOT!

MAGIC FOOT, *roll right*
MAGIC FOOT, *onto stomach/arms*
MAGIC FOOT

ALL

FOOT!

#5a - Magic Foot Playoff

#5A

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. If there is only one volunteer left at this point, skip this volunteer spot.)

PANCH

Miss Park.

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

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.

PANCH

That's remarkable.

PARK

And correct.

RONA

Miss Park is all business.

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?

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 t's. 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 t's...

CHIP

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

#6 - Pandemonium (Reprise)

#6

PANCH

(can overlap above)

"If you start to spell a word you may start over..."

(loop) ghaub 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

(All freeze but MITCH.)

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.

(bringing all back to life)

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.

#6a – Chip Goodbye

6A

SPELLERS

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

#6b – Rona Moment #2

6B

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, to an audience member)

Shut up.

FINAL AUDIENCE VOLUNTEER

(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" – i.e, unless their answer is entirely implausible, they are retained, to the great surprise of PANCH and RONA, amazed at the volunteer's good spelling.

E.g. (following is from Jay Reiss's instructions to subsequent PANCH actors 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.

The same volunteer is immediately called again. He/She is given a conspicuously, preferably ridiculously, difficult word. Favorites have been "Lysergic acid deithylamide" and "Xerophthalmiology" (pronounced without the "ph" sound). If the speller begins with "z" they are immediately dinged without waiting for the rest of the word. We very much hope the volunteer gets this one wrong. In the unfortunate event that they don't, and volunteer must be given a third word in a row, they are told "no" to "can I have a definition," and begged to misspell the word when given a sentence.

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.)

#7 - Prayer Of The Comfort Counselor

#7

MITCH

10%

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] *offense*
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

J stands
L stand
M stand
A stand
C stand

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

Step touch
Swivel

NOT YOUR MOTHER!
OOOOHHHH

ALL

Arm 





PRAYER

MITCH

GOODBYE GOODBYE.

ALL


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

Turn  Turn 
Box spin  Turn 
Left Right
Left forward

MITCH

GOOD!
BYE!
MR/MISS _____ (fills in name of final volunteer)

ALL

GOODBYE! 
foot on chair

(CHIP enters from lobby.

Kids on stage get to take a break during below.)

PANCH

(comes in with refreshments for kids)

Snack break.

#8 – Chip’s Lament Intro

#8

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)

#9 – Chip’s Lament

#9

See **Production Note: Alternate “Chip’s Lament”** on page 80

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?

(CHIP)

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.

(mimicking Rona)

"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.

(CHIP)

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.)

What are you nuts!

(sees what it is)

Nuts! You threw the yellow ones!

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

(OLIVE comes and picks up the package. Gives it back to Chip.)

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

(RONA separates the kids.)

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 the original set, by Beowulf Boritt, 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. After they have parted)

"Olive." "I love." —That's so retarded.

#10 — Woe Is Me

#10

(Adults re-enter.)

RONA

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

(still nursing hurt of previous comment)

I'm not all business.

RONA

From Cold Spring Country Day, Mr. William Barfee.

(BARFEE throws up arms in helpless gesture.)

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 DAD

*1st vamp
2nd vamp*

DAN DAD

WE HATE LOSERS
WHICH IS WHY WE DISCIPLINE.
GOD HATES LOSERS
BECAUSE LOSERS DO NOT KNOW HOW TO WIN.

Yes we do. Go get 'em!

(agreeing) No one likes a loser!

But you are a winner.

And we have faith in you, honey.

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.

(SCHWARZY)

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

Head Swing

SCHWARZY

WHICH IS WHY I GOTTA WIN THIS SPELLING BEE

(The dads are taking pre-bee photos.)

CARL DAD

(wanting Logainne to pose by herself):

Take another picture for her B.M.

SCHWARZY

Dad!

DAN DAD

Don't call her that, Carl.

CARL DAD

Sorry. Her "Birth Mother."

SCHWARZY

Peggy Jenkins.

DAN DAD

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.

Spin to left

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

Get on chair

DADS & SPELLERS

*Dads cross
& circle*

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

SCHWARZY

WOE IS ME

Look @ her

WOE IS ME

LOOK

DADS & SPELLERS

BE SMART, BE COOL
BE SMART, BE COOL
BE SMART, BE COOL
BE SMART, BE

Shake at end

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.)

#11 – Spelling Montage

#11

PANCH

Miss Schwarzandgrubeniére. 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 motion, fairly incomprehensible by this point)

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.

(fast-motion magic foot and spelled correctly)

PANCH

That's correct.

BARFEE

I know.

PANCH

Miss Park. ROOIBOS.

PARK

(extremely sped up, she spells correctly)

R-o-o-i-b-o-s.

PANCH

Correct. Miss Schwartzandgrubenierre. TILAPIA.

SCHWARZY

T-i-l-a-p-i-a.

(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 motion 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.

(SPELLERS, now in a line, each take a moment at mic, then go to back.)

PANCH

Miss SchwarzandGrubeniery, 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

Q-U

OLIVE

M-N

BARFEE

P-E. Clepe.

PARK

That is correct.

PANCH

(SPELLERS circle.)

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...)

CORRECT CORRECT CORRECT CORRECT

CORRECT CORRECT CORRECT CORRECT

(Rings bell)

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.

#11a - I'm Not That Smart (Reprise)

#11a

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;

(CONEYBEAR)

BUT JUST NOT MINE,
SINCE I O-PINE
I THINK - I KNOW - I'M SMART

Apple juice please.

#11b - Coneybear Goodbye

#11b

(CONEYBEAR shakes Mitch's hand and exits. Other spellers pay him tribute as he leaves in triumph.)

PANCH

Mr. Barfee.

BARFEE

(given up by this point)

Whatever.

RONA

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

BARFEE

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.

PANCH

Doug Panch.

BARFEE

Will Barfee.

PANCH

Miss Park.

RONA

Miss Park speaks five languages.

MARCY

(SHE's had it with these comments)

No I don't.

Don't you?

RONA

No.

MARCY

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...

#12 - I Speak Six Languages

#12

MARCY

RONA

I SPEAK SIX LANGUAGES.

Ah. Six.

EVERY LANGUAGE EASY

EASY AS THE RECIPE FOR MAKING JELLO. *Eddie holds bowl*

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 *side to side* TEMPERAMENT.

APPARENTLY I HAVE THE TEMPERAMENT.

gives ball to puppet - YES I SCORE SOME GOALS. *LOOK at ceiling*

SO UNFAZED AM I, *look forward*
AS MY LIFE UNSCROLLS *TINY steps back*

UNAMAZED AM I

I DON'T LIKE TO BRAG *embarrassed*

AND I WON'T CAUSE I DON'T HAVE TO BUT *sassy back facing*

I SPEAK SIX LANGUAGES. *walk to mic*

(MARCY)

ALL AMERICAN IN HOCKEY.
 AND EVERYTIME I STRETCH I STRETCH WITHOUT GETTING SORE.
 I SPEAK SIX LANGUAGES
 AND I LIKE THE THEME FROM "ROCKY" *little punch*
 THOUGH I PLAY MOZART MORE. *play piano*
(Throughout song, MARCY is featured doing splits, cartwheels, dancing in several styles, twirling and tossing a baton, and kick-chopping a board in half.)

Put medal back Give medal
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

(MARCY takes place of music director 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

(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

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

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

#13 - Jesus

#13

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

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?

*prayer
on beat 4
Marcy?*

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.

Unpause

ALL

AAAAAHHHHHHHH!

MARCY

*Pause
0/14*

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)

Unpause

MARCY

GIRLS

I BLEW THAT WORD.

I BLEW THAT WORD

PRAISE JESUS!

LIFE HAS SUCH POSSIBILITY

SHE BLEW THAT WORD

PRAISE JESUS!

(MARCY)

(GIRLS)

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 WON'T WIN

GOODBYE!

(MITCH approaches MARCY.

SHE leaps joyfully into his arms and HE carries her offstage.)

RONA

Three spellers remain!

#13a - Three Spellers Remain! Sluice!

#13a

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.)

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.)

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.)

See **APPENDIX #3: Schwarzy Ad-Libs** on page 94 for more examples

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

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.

Start
at
15

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 offstage with RONA assisting him.)

[different productions have handled this differently – in one Panch collapses and is pulled offstage, 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.)

CARL DAD

Thanks Sweetie, I'll take it from here. Can we have a little privacy please?
Breathe, Logainne. You're okay, buck up.

(as he pours a can of coke on the floor)

Oh that's no good.

(aside to Schwarzzy)

No, no, let that dry.

(CARL DAD)

(pulls her aside)

The foot, we have to disable the foot.

SCHWARZY

What foot?

CARL DAD

The magic foot.

SCHWARZY

Wouldn't that be wrong?

CARL DAD

Do you want to win?

SCHWARZY

Yes, but I believe in ethical conduct.

CARL DAD

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, he ad libs thanks to MITCH, only if needed for staging – e.g. "Thanks Mitch, I appreciate the tough love and the juice box." The "defense" PANCH offers is also an occasional ad lib spot. Again, if staging allows, keep things moving rather than adding anything to the moment. The briefer the better.)

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. Visionary.

#14 - *The I Love You Song*

#14

Wildly fanciful. Highly unrealistic."

(Olive sees a fantasy 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.

(OLIVE'S MOM)

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.
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.

(OLIVE)

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.)

PANCH

CREPUSCULE

BARFEE

I'm sorry crep...?

PANCH

Crepuscule.

BARFEE

Crepuscule. One moment please.

SCHWARZY

(tries to get BARFEE's attention to warn him about sticky spot on floor)

William. William.

(RONA and PANCH shush SCHWARZY.)

#14a - Crepuscule

#14a

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 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.

#15 – Woe Is Me (Reprise)

#15

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!

#15a - How Exciting

#15a

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.

#15b - Rona Moment #3

#15b

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.)

#16 - Second (Part 1)

#16

CORYZA

(repeating)

Coryza.

ILSPILE

(repeating)

Ilspile.

ZOONOSIS

(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?

BARFEE

PANCH

OLIVE

PANCH

BARFEE

FABACEAE

(for Barfee's benefit)

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

PANCH

OLIVE

CHROMATAPHORE

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,

OLIVE and BARFEE go head to head.)

PANCH

BARFEE

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. Astrobleme.

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 ODIUS AND FECUND.
YOU WILL NOT OUTRANK ME.
I WON'T WAVE MY HANKIE

OLIVE

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

BARFEE

SECOND
I WON'T COME IN
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.

*(Ding
Music stops.)*

CHORUS

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

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.

#17 - *Weltanschauung*

#17

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.

#17a - *Olive & Barfee Pas De Deux*

#17a

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.)

#17b - Second Part 2

#17b

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.

I AM
 I AM FINE WITH SECOND.
 I CAN LIVE WITH SECOND
 YES, SECOND
 I WILL COME IN SECOND.

WHO WILL
 WHO WILL
 COME IN
 SECOND
 SECOND
 OOH
 OOH
 OOH

BUT SHOULD I COME IN SECOND?

BUT SHOULD I COME IN SECOND?

IS SECOND FOR ME ?

MY FEARS WERE ODIOS AND
 FECUND.

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

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!

#18 - The Champion

#18

RONA

CHORUS

CHAMPION!
JUST SENSATIONAL
REPRESENTATIONAL

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 point to, 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, HE 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

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 reception 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.)

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—

(All ad lib first line of letters simultaneously. None is comprehensible above others.)

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 7th try and final year of eligibility. She went on to become Secretary of Education under President [Chastity Bono]*!

(dropping lisp)

Her speech therapy was completely successful.

**(Ad lib instruction: the name of the future president can be swapped to retain topical relevance. Keep character's politics in mind.)*

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: *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.*

**Alternate Olive epilogue (Sheinkin's original that Finn found too depressing, but agreed could be offered as an alternate for those who found it perversely uplifting):*

Olive Ostrovsky went home to an empty house, an uncertain future, and a well-worn dictionary — but a strange new conviction that she would be able to face all three.

#20 - Finale

#20

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...

#21 - Bows

#21

ALL

GOODBYE -

GOODBYE -

GOODBYE -

Etc.

#22 - Exit Music

#22