Teaching materials

Sekundarstufe I

“The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee“



**What is a Spelling Bee?**

A spelling Bee is a competition in which the participants are asked to spell a variety of words. It is won by the individual or team who spells the greatest number of words correctly. As soon as a contestant misspells a word he or she is eliminated from the competition. As the competition progresses the difficulty of the words is increased.

The spelling bee originated in the USA but it has emigrated to other regions/countries, even to Germany.

**Content of the musical**

The musical “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee” is a comedy - play which deals with a fictional spelling contest - the spelling bee. This contest takes place in the Putnam Valley Middle School and is run by three quirky[[1]](#footnote-1) grown-ups.

The 6 middle schoolers are determined[[2]](#footnote-2) to win the spelling competition for various[[3]](#footnote-3) reasons.

During the competition the participants express their hopes, passions and struggles in several happy, touchy and catchy songs.

**The main characters**

**Olive Ostrovsky**

Olive is a complete newcomer to competitive spelling. Her mother lives in an ashram in India and her father works late. Even though he is really busy with his work he tries to come to the bee and watch his daughter. Olive has made friends with her dictionary. Her “friend” is helping her to make it to the competition. Olive is an enormously shy person but during the play she slowly starts to warmup.

**William Morris Barfée**

William was the finalist of the spelling bee last year. He had to be eliminated due to an allergic reaction to peanuts. He now wants to win the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. William has developed a special method of spelling - “the magic foot”. This method of spelling helped him to win, even though he has one working nostril. He has a very touchy, bullying personality. During the play he develops a crush on Olive.

**Leaf Coneybear**

Leaf gets into the competition on a lark[[4]](#footnote-4) and he finds everything about the spelling contest really amusing. He has severe Attention Deficit Disorder but he is able to spell the words correctly while being in a state of trance. Leaf comes from a large family of former hippies and he is home schooled.

**Logainne "Schwarzy" SchwartzandGrubenierre**

Logainne is the youngest speller of all and on top of that she is the most politically aware. She often brings up current political figures. Her family situation is out of the ordinary- she has two gay fathers. Logainne is a person who is driven by external and internal pressure but above everything she is driven by the desire to make her two fathers proud. To the amusement of the audience she speaks with a lisp which creates very amusing scenes during the play.

**Marcy Park**

Marcy is a transfer student from Virginia. She was placed ninth in the last championship. Marcy is a poster child of the Over-Achieving Asian. Not only is she a good speller but also a member of all-American hockey. She is a championship rugby player and is able to play Chopin and Mozart on multiple instruments. Marcy is a person who only sleeps only 3 hours a night, hiding in the bathroom cabinet and is really tired of always winning. She is attending a school called “Our Lady of Intermittent Sorrows” and isn’t allowed to cry.

**Charlito "Chip" Tolentino**

Chip is an athletic, social, boy scout and the champion of last 24th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee. He wants to defend his title on this year’s spelling bee but unfortunately he finds puberty hitting at a really inappropriate moment.

**1 Exercises**

Now that you’ve read all descriptions of the main characters of the musical, please answer the following questions:

1. Who has two gay fathers?

2. Who is the youngest contestant in the spelling bee?

3. Why does Logainne take part in “The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee”?

4. Which contestant has developed a special method of spelling?

5. Who has a dictionary as a best friend?

6. What is Marcy’s character like?

7. Who was the winner of the 24th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee?

8. Which character has got a severe Attention Deficit Disorder?

**2 Exercises**

Imagine you are a character in the play. What would your character be like? What methods have you developed to win the spelling bee? What is your motivation to win? What are your abilities? Write a text with at least 80 words.

**Life is Pandemonium lyrics**

telephone hospital broccoli spellers life is Pandemonium dinosaur win

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Please spell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*SPELLERS* (spoken): What! Telephone? C’mon!, etc.

*CHIP:* My oh my

*CHIP, OLIVE*: That word’s so moronic

*LOGAINNE*: I could cry. I want words as lame

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Mr. Coneybear

*LEAF*: Simplify. I feel supersonic

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Spell \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*SPELLERS* (spoken): Aw, c’mon! What?, etc.

*MARCY*: That is why. I despise this game

*LEAF* (overlapping Marcy, spoken): H-o-s-p-i-t-a-l. Hospital

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): That is correct. Mr. Tolentino:

*BOY SPELLERS*: Life is random and unfair. Life is Pandemonium

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Staphylococcus.

*CHIP* (spoken): Awwww!

*SPELLERS*: That’s the reason we despair

*CHIP:* Life is Pandemonium

*LEAF*: Life is Pandemonium

*CHIP*: Life is Pandemonium

*WILLIAM*: Life is Pandemonium

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

*LEAF*: I knew that word

*OLIVE*: I knew that word

*WILLIAM*: I knew that word

*SPELLERS*: God damnit!

*CHIP*: It is such a calamity

*SPELLERS*: Where should we begin? The best \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*CHIP*: Don’t necessarily win

*SPELLERS* (overlapping Chip): Life is Pandemonium. \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

*MARCY*: Set your sights. I am on a mission

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Miss Park: Antediluvian.

*LOGAINNE*: We have rights.

(spoken) We have rights!

(sung) That’s why we complain

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Mr. Barfee: Halitosis

*WILLIAM*: Damn life bites. But I like competition

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Miss Ostrovsky: Schematic

*OLIVE*: In these lies. Can you feel our pain?

*MR. PANCH* (spoken):Somebody spell crayon

*SPELLERS* (spoken): Crayon?!

*MITCH*: Life is random and unfair. Life is Pandemonium

*SPELLERS*: That’s the reason we despair

*CHIP*: Life is Pandemonium

*MITCH*: Life is Pandemonium

*CHIP*: Life is Pandemonium

*WILLAIM* (spoken): Life is Pandemonium!

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_.

*CHIP*: I knew that word

*GIRL SPELLERS*: I knew that word

*CHIP*: I knew that word

*SPELLERS*: God damnit! It is such a calamity. Where should we begin? The best spellers

*CHIP*: Don’t necessarily \_\_\_\_\_\_\_. They don’t win. They don’t win. They don’t win

*SPELLERS* (overlapping Chip): Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium

*CHIP*: No they don’t

*SPELLERS*: Life is random and unfair

*CHIP*: Life is Pandemonium. Yes it is. Oh yes it is

*SPELLERS* (overlapping Chip): Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium.

Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium.

Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium.

Life is Pandemonium.

*CHIP*: Yes it is!

*ALL*: Yeah!

**3 Exercises**

1. Listen to the song “ Life is Pandemonium” („ Das Leben ist ein Durcheinander“).

2. Listen to the song a second time and fill in the gaps while listening.

**ANSWER KEY**

**1 Exercises**

Now that you’ve read all descriptions of the main characters of the musical, please answer the following questions:

1. Who has two gay fathers?

**Logainne has two gay fathers.**

2. Who is the youngest contestant in the spelling bee?

**Logainne is the youngest contestant in the spelling bee.**

4. Which contestant has developed a special method of spelling?

**William has developed a special method of spelling - the “magic foot “.**

5. Who has a dictionary as a best friend?

**Olive has a dictionary as a best friend.**

6. What are Marcy’s abilities? Name three of them

**Marcy is a poster child of the Over-Achieving Asian. She is a good speller,**

**a championship rugby player and she is able to play Chopin and Mozart on**

**multiple instruments.**

7. Who was the winner of the 24th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee?

**Charlito is the winner of the 24th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.**

8. Which character has got a severe Attention Deficit Disorder?

**Leaf has got a severe Attention Deficit Disorder.**

**3 Exercises**

**Life is Pandemonium lyrics**

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Please spell telephone

*SPELLERS* (spoken): What! Telephone? C’mon!, etc.

*CHIP:* My oh my

*CHIP, OLIVE*: That word’s so moronic

*LOGAINNE*: I could cry. I want words as lame

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Mr. Coneybear

*LEAF*: Simplify. I feel supersonic

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Spell hospital

*SPELLERS* (spoken): Aw, c’mon! What?, etc.

*MARCY*: That is why. I despise this game

*LEAF* (overlapping Marcy, spoken): H-o-s-p-i-t-a-l. Hospital

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): That is correct. Mr. Tolentino:

*BOY SPELLERS*: Life is random and unfair. Life is Pandemonium

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Staphylococcus.

*CHIP* (spoken): Awwww!

*SPELLERS*: That’s the reason we despair

*CHIP:* Life is Pandemonium

*LEAF*: Life is Pandemonium

*CHIP*: Life is Pandemonium

*WILLIAM*: Life is Pandemonium

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Broccoli.

*LEAF*: I knew that word

*OLIVE*: I knew that word

*WILLIAM*: I knew that word

*SPELLERS*: God damnit!

*CHIP*: It is such a calamity

*SPELLERS*: Where should we begin? The best spellers

*CHIP*: Don’t necessarily win

*SPELLERS* (overlapping Chip): Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium

*MARCY*: Set your sights. I am on a mission

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Miss Park: Antediluvian.

*LOGAINNE*: We have rights.

(spoken) We have rights!

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*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Mr. Barfee: Halitosis

*WILLIAM*: Damn life bites. But I like competition

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Miss Ostrovsky: Schematic

*OLIVE*: In these lies. Can you feel our pain?

*MR. PANCH* (spoken):Somebody spell crayon

*SPELLERS* (spoken): Crayon?!

*MITCH*: Life is random and unfair. Life is Pandemonium

*SPELLERS*: That’s the reason we despair

*CHIP*: Life is Pandemonium

*MITCH*: Life is Pandemonium

*CHIP*: Life is Pandemonium

*WILLAIM* (spoken): Life is Pandemonium!

*MR. PANCH* (spoken): Dinosaur.

*CHIP*: I knew that word

*GIRL SPELLERS*: I knew that word

*CHIP*: I knew that word

*SPELLERS*: God damnit! It is such a calamity. Where should we begin? The best spellers

*CHIP*: Don’t necessarily win. They don’t win. They don’t win. They don’t win

*SPELLERS* (overlapping Chip): Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium

*CHIP*: No they don’t

*SPELLERS*: Life is random and unfair

*CHIP*: Life is Pandemonium. Yes it is. Oh yes it is

*SPELLERS* (overlapping Chip): Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium.

Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium.

Life is Pandemonium. Life is Pandemonium.

Life is Pandemonium.

*CHIP*: Yes it is!

*ALL*: Yeah!

**Game**

Divide the class into two groups. Each group should be about the same size. Now the word-cards should be mixed. Make sure that the students can’t see the words written on them. Now each group should pick one speller. After that both spellers have to line up in front of the class.

The terms of the participants should be decided upon beforehand. After that the teacher should pick one card and show it to the spellers. After both students have read the word written on the card the first one can start spelling. The time should be stopped while one student spells the word.

Afterward the second speller starts to spell as fast as he/ she can. Just like the first time, this time somebody should take the time as well. In the end both times should be compared and the one who was able to spell the word faster gets a point.

Now repeat it until everyone out of every group has taken turns. The group which has scored the most points wins.

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| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| telephone | dinosaur | life | musical |
| contest | broccoli | problem | spellers |
| student | computer | classroom | microphone |
| songtext | win | idea | word |
| language | theatre | hospital | sorrow |
| simple | cry | second | joyful |
| unfair | touchy | depressed | wrong |
| loose | complain | know | fail |

1. eigenartig [↑](#footnote-ref-1)
2. entschlossen [↑](#footnote-ref-2)
3. verschiedene [↑](#footnote-ref-3)
4. aus Jux und Tollerei [↑](#footnote-ref-4)