

Spelling Bee

Words Are Powerful!

The Bee is an egalitarian gathering in which kids from every social class compete in a true meritocracy. In the most idealistic American tradition, the Bee offers a level playing field, in which color of skin and your last name mean nothing, but hard work and belief in self mean everything.

It's a language story, in which that cultural sponge known as the English language plays a starring role. The top spellers are obsessive etymologists. They are language detectives, exploring lingual patterns, digging into Latin and Greek and French, looking for clues to help them decipher obscure poly-syllabics. Spelling, at this level, is about far more than recitation. It's about understanding how the language is built, and how the history of English created this eccentric patchwork call modern spelling. It's about all the skills that further literacy: voracious reading, a sprawling vocabulary, even knowledge of grammar. The Bee is like a yearly Woodstock for the language arts crowd.

First and foremost – and here we get to the heart of the Bee – it's a story about kids, about how the Bee's challenges transform them. Or, more accurately, how the kids transform themselves. For these top spellers, the Bee is an odyssey that includes the smaller bees they must win, countless hours of study and drill, and a semi-Olympian process of psych-up.

In short, the Bee is an invaluable nugget of American life. Despite the odd niche it occupies, it says a lot about who we are, our oddness, our strengths. And, after enduring for hundreds of years, it's a folk tradition that can safely claim to be a permanent part of the American scene. The Bee is a story that deserves to be told.

James Maguire

Benefits for each participating child:

- Learning opportunity (i.e. mastery of words, knowledge and origin of words, etc.)
- Educational tool for life
- Builds self-confidence
- Challenge
- A chance to boast ones' talents
- Representation of participating schools
- Competing students receive FREE admission to the Fair
- Competing students receive a Participation Ribbon
- Competing students who make it to the final round receive a Rosette
- Winning students receive awards (i.e. trophy, savings bond, OSF ride wristband)
- Students get to enjoy all aspects of the Ohio State Fair, and just have lot's of fun