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Akeelah And The Bee

By Doug Atchison

A-K
A-E-L
E-L-E-L-A
K-E-E
A-K-E-E
AkeeIah
A-A-E
E-L-A
A-K
AkeeIah,
AkeeIah
A-K-E-E-L-A-H

AkeeIah:

where no matter what you do
or where you go
you just don't fit in?
I don't know the word for that.
AIienation, estrangement...
incompatibiIity?
Naw, those ain't right.
But there's gotta be a word for it,
because that's how I feeI aII the time.
My name's AkeeIah Anderson
and I'm 11 years oId.
And this aII starts
at Crenshaw MiddIe SchooI
in South Los AngeIes.
You're aII in the seventh grade now
and I know you can do better than this.
So when I give you
a Iist of words, study them.
AkeeIah!
How long did you study
for this speIIing test?
I didn't.
See me after cIass.
Okay, you two need to turn around.
Enough!
You know, you couId be
one of my very best students.
But you don't turn in
haIf your homework.
Sometimes you don't even

show up for class.

- What's going on?

- I don't know.

Have you heard of-

have you heard

of next week's spelling bee?

No.

Well, I think you should

sign up for it.

Does he really think I'm

gonna be walking around

with somebody in little shorts

like that? He crazy!

- Ooh, is Devon coming back today?

- Yeah. Got a two-week leave.

Your brother is fine!

I got it all figured out- look.

He gonna be the pilot

on a big commercial jet

and I'm gonna be

the flight attendant.

Got any change

for an old man, girls?

Ain't got no change for myself.

Damn, Derrick-T's new ride is tight!

He's been trying to get

Terrence in trouble.

Girl, your bro can get

his own self in trouble.

- So what'd Ms. Cross want?

- Nothin'.

Just talking about

some stupid-ass spelling bee.

You gonna do it?

- You'd probably be good.

- And get up in front of everybody?

I'd probably pee in my pants.

Tell me about the boy in your class

with the itty-bitty shorts.

I think he's cute.

Yes!

Yes!

- Keele, Mama says go eat.

- I'm about to get a high score.

- One minute.
- I don't care.
Mama says go eat!
Oh yeah! I've been dreaming about
your cooking for the past five months.
Let me take that.
At least I got one baby
appreciate what I do around here.
We all appreciate you.
Hey- give me some sugar.
- Where is Terrence?
- I don't know. Maybe still at practice.
Practice was over an hour ago.
I know one thing-
he better not be hanging out
with no Derrick-T.
Derrick-T?
That fool still alive?
- Not after you get done with him.
- That's right.
- Hey, you.
- So-
how many planes have you
shot down so far?
So far zero. But you don't do
too much shooting sitting behind
- a computer screen in Nevada.
- Oooh, good.
You stay on the ground.
Let them white boys go up there.
- You stay down here where you belong.
- Mama, I'm gonna have my wings
and my college degree before you know
it- unless this one beats me to it.
Not skipping class
with Georgia Cavanaugh, she won't.
- Skipping class?
- Only PE.
- You better not be skipping no class.
- Akeelah, go turn off that television.
Hey, hey- flip it over
to ESPN real quick
and let me check out
that Laker score, all right?

I need you to talk to Terrence...

Man on TV:

sprays, no more glue traps,
and no more throwing your money away.

The scientific design of the-

If you spell the next word correctly,
you will be the champion.

- What's this?

- Akeelah, turn off the TV now.

- "Brunneous. "

- B...

R- U-N-

N- E-O-U-S.

- Brunneous.

- Congratulations.

You are the Scripps

National Spelling Bee Champion.

Akeelah needs to listen!

Turn it off now!

Brunneous...

brunneous?

"Brunneous:

used chiefly scientifically."

Well, why can't they just say brown?

Daddy, have you ever

heard of this word?

Yeah, probably did.

Cauterize, C-A-U-T-E-R-I-Z-E.

Fortification,

F- O-R-T-I-F-I-C-A-T-I-O-N.

Correspond,

C- O-R-R-E-S-P-O-N-D...

Woman on PA:

...construction on our northeast lot,
traffic will be directed
to the side alley.

This will be through the month.

Drop-offs will be from the south gate.

Hey, freak.

We want you to take care
of our English homework.

- Everybody say you a brainiac.

- I ain't no brainiac.

Like heII you ain't!

AlwAys got them A's down, right?

Yeah, she's scared of us.

Don't run away-

I cannot thank you enough
for coming down here today, Josh.

I've got the district
breathing down my back.

The test scores have
gone down again this year.

As I said earLier,

I appreciate your diIemma, Bob,
but I reaLIy don't understand
what it is I have to offer.

No no no, aII I want you to do
is look at these kids
and teII me if you think
my idea's crazy.

I think some of them
have a lot of potentiaI.

GiRIs!

Why aren't you in cLass?

- She holding us up.

- AkeeIah!

Are you signed up
for the speIIing bee today?

No.

I want you to come
to my office, please.

So, Ms. Cross teIIs me
you've never missed a word
on your speIIing tests.

But your attendance record
leaves a littIe to be desired.

- You're 11, did you skip a grade?

- The second.

AkeeIah, have you ever heard
of the Scripps NationaI SpeIIing Bee?

- I think it was on TV Iast week.

- Yes!

Yes, they show it
on ESPN every year.

Middle school students
from all over the country
compete in school district
and regional spelling bees
trying to make it to the national
spelling bee in Washington DC.
Next year, I want
one of our students there.
So whoever wins
the school bee today
gets to represent Crenshaw
at the district bee
- next month.
- Why would anybody want
to represent a school that can't even
put doors on the toilet stalls?
Akeelah, if we can't show
our students can perform,
we're not going to have money for books,
let alone bathroom doors.
Now, I want you to do
the bee today, all right?
So everybody can call me
a freak and a brainiac?
No, I ain't down
for no spelling bee.
Well, maybe you'd be "down" for spending
the rest of the semester
in detention
for all of your absences.
I'd like to welcome you all
to Crenshaw's first schoolwide
spelling bee.
We have some very special students
competing today,
so let's give them all
a round of applause.
Whoo!
Okay, we drew numbers to see
who would go first,
and that's Chuckie Johnson
from the eighth grade.
Hey hey hey, Chuckie
ba-ba-baby.

Mr. WeIch, I have a question
about the basketbaII nets.
Chuckie!
You need to pay attention.
Now, we're gonna start things off
with "groveI."
GraveI, Iike IittIe rocks?
No, groveI Iike
get down
on your knees and groveI.
Get down on my knees?
What?!
Just speII the word.
Uh, G-R...
A- V-E-L.
No, Chuckie, you speIIed graveI.

I meant groveI:

You weren't Iistening.
I'm sorry, Chuckie.
- Who cares?
- Okay, next up,
AkeeIah Anderson.
Oh, you go, girI!
AkeeIah, your word is "doubt."
- Doubt.
- D-O-U-B-T.
I'm sorry, AkeeIah,
you have to speak up.
D- O-U-B-T.
Very good.
Next, CaIvin Baker...
P- L-A-S-I-D.
PIacid.
I'm sorry,
it's P-L-A-C-I-D.
Okay, AkeeIah,
if you get this word
you wiII be the winner.
"FancifuI."
- Fan-
- F-A-N-C-I-F-U-L.

- GirI:

- That is correct,
and you have won Crenshaw's
inaugural spelling bee.
Whoo!
Whatever.
Excuse me.
Spell "prestidigitation."
I'm sorry, sir,
but this girl is only 11,
and she's already won.
Mr. Welch, what is this?
Prestidigitation,
can you spell it?
P- R-E-S-T-I-D-I-G-I-T-A-T-I-O-N,
prestidigitation.
That's correct.
Whoo!
- "Ambidextrous."
- A-M-B-I-D-E-X-T-R-O-U-S.
- "Pterodactyl."
- P-T-E-R-O-D-A-C-T-Y-L.
- "Punichritude."
- P...
P- U-L-C...
R...
I- T-U-D-E...
punichritude?
That's incorrect.
It's from the Latin root "puncher"
and there's an H after the C.
See?
She ain't so smart.
- Run for it! See ya!
- Bye, sweetie.
Akeelah, wait!
Where are you going?
You did great.
You were spelling words
I don't know how to spell.
Mr. Welch, I told you I did not want
to do this. They're laughing at me.
They laugh
because you intimidate them.
But if you'd stood your ground,

you might have earned their respect.
Bob, the girl has potential
but she needs to be coached.
Do you know who that was?
That was Dr. Joshua Larabee.
He used to chair
the English department at UCLA.
He and I went to college together.
But get this-
when he was a kid, he went all the way
to the national spelling bee.
And he thinks you have a chance
of going there yourself.
I'm sorry,
but I ain't doin'
no more spelling bees.
Akeelah-
Girl, you kicked some major booty
on that stage today.
But I couldn't spell pichritude.
But you knocked all them other words
right back at that dude.
They were just trick words. Everybody
knows pterodactyl starts with a P.
Girl, if I could spell like you,
I know I could be a flight attendant.

Devon:

Keele, hey, wake up.
Hey.
- Dev, are you leaving?
- Yeah, gotta get back to the base.
Hey, your principal
called Mama.
Said you did real good
in the spelling bee last week.
- I messed up a word.
- He said you got a lot of them right.
He also said
you've got an opportunity
to go to an even bigger
contest next week.
- I don't want to do it.
- Why not?

Everybody's gonna be
Looking at me
and there's gonna be
tons of words I don't know.
So you're scared, huh?
How do you think I felt the first time
I had to jump out of an airplane?
I mean, my whole body
said "Don't do it."
But sometimes your brain gotta be
smarter than your body, you know?
But I don't like my school.
I don't see why I gotta do
anything for them.
Then do it for Dad.
I mean, you know
how he was about words.
He'd have loved to see you
do something like this.
- What'd Mama say about it?
- You know how Mama is.
She got a million things
to worry about.
Tell you what,
just do this contest,
and if you make it all the way to DC,
I will parachute down to see you.
Would you like that?
That is a wonderful decision, Akeelah,
a wonderful decision.
You think maybe the school
could buy me a new outfit,
you know, for the district bee?
Uh... I don't know, maybe.
If you make it to the state regional,
maybe something could be arranged.
But you're gonna have to finish in
the top 10 at the district level first.
And, Akeelah, you're going to be going
up against kids from Santa Monica,
Woodland Hills, Beverly Hills.
Some of these kids have been doing this
for years and never even made it to DC.
- Well, maybe I should just give up now.

- No no no.

No, I'm just saying
you need to train hard.

- With Dr. Larabee.

- What?

I don't need any help from him.

I could do this on my own.

Akeelah, the best spellers

in the world have coaches.

I finally got him to consider

taking some time

during his sabbatical

to work with you.

Please, just talk with him.

Here.

He doesn't live far from here.

He lives in this neighborhood?

I thought you said

he was important.

And take this, it's a copy

of last year's spelling bee.

- "Sacciform. "

- May I have the definition, please?

Resembling a pouch.

May I have the language

of origin, please?

- Latin.

- Latin?

I thought this was

supposed to be English.

...I-F-O-R-

"Scutate"?

Can I have the definition?

"Longicollis."

- "Ginglymus."

- "Empennage."

- "Souchong."

- "Intussusception."

- Hey, what's dat?

- Any alternate pronunciations?

Where you been?

Mama's worried.

Mama should just chill, a'ight?

- What you looking at?

- SpeIIing bee.
Oh yeah, I heard about that.
You going up against
a bunch of rich white kids.
They gonna tear your bIack ass up.

Man:

Intussusception is
I- N-T-U-S-S-U-S-C-E-P-T-I-O-N.

You're Iate.

- You didn't answer the door.

- That's because you're Iate.

Come in.

Come come come.

So...

- you want to Iearn how to speII.

- I know how to speII.

- SpeII "staphyIococci."

- Um...

S- T-A-F-

There is no F. It's derived
from the Greek so there can't be an F.

StaphyIococci:

S- T-A-

P- H-Y-

L- O-C-O-

C- C-I.

Winning word,
nationaI speIIing bee
1987.

The first thing
most serious speIIers do
is Iearn aII of the winning words
and their origins.

WeII, maybe I ain't that serious.

Maybe neither am I.

So why are you home
during the day?

- Ain't you got a job?

- Do me a favor,

Ieave the ghetto taIk

outside, aII right?

Ghetto taIk?

I don't talk ghetto.
Hm, "ain't you got no job?"
You use that language
to fit in with your friends.
Here you will speak properly
or you won't speak at all.
- Understood?
- Yeah.
Whatever.
- You can leave now.
- Excuse me?
- I said you can leave.
- How come?
Because I don't have time
to waste on insolent little girls.
Insolent?
I ain't insolent-
I mean I'm not insolent.
It's just the first thing you do
is start doggin' on-
criticizing the way I speak.
I thought this was
just about spelling words.
Well then, fine.
You know what?
When I put my mind to it,
I can memorize anything.
And I don't need help
from a dictatorial, truculent,
supercilious gardener.
I'm sorry to be so insolent.

Lymphomatotic:

Laboratory:

Preglacial...

Irreferable:

Erythropiasia:

- Microzoospore-

- Hey.

Baby, what are you still doing up?

I've gotta learn more words.

You gonna come see me
in the district bee this Saturday?
- What, is that at your school?
- Naw.
- Beverly Hills.
- Beverly Hills?
Look, you got other homework.
You need to focus on that. I don't want
you spending all your time on this game.
It ain't a game!
Are you gonna come see me in it?
You know I work at the hospital
on Saturday.
Maybe Kiana can go with you.
As long as she don't bring
that whiny baby.
Come on, girls, let's go.
We're gonna be late.
Dang.
I hope they ain't all here to spell.
Okay, go get your number.
- We'll be sitting back here.
- Good luck, Keele.
Hi. Name?
Akeelah Anderson.
Right here at the top.
I think you're the first speller we've
ever had from Crenshaw Middle School.
Um... how many kids
are in this thing?
Next.
Need some help?
Don't worry, I won't impale you.
- This your first time?
- Yeah.
- You?
- Second year.
I made it to nationals last year,
finished 13th.
Lucky 13.
You went all the way to DC?
Three of us made it from my school
in Woodland Hills.
See that kid right there?

That's Dylan Chiu.
He's come in second place
at nationals for two years in a row.
This is his last year and everybody
thinks he's gonna win.
Frankly, I'd like to shove him
off a steep precipice.
Hey, my name is Javier.
- I'm Akeelah.
- Hope you make the top 10.
I hope I'm not the first one out.

Man:

their positions on stage, please?
Remember, if you don't know how to spell
a word, spell it the way it sounds.
Kids mess up all the time when they
think they're being thrown curveballs,
- and they're not. Good luck.
- Good luck to you too.
- Thank you.
- E...
M...
B- R...
I...
C- A...
T- I-O-N,
embrocation.
- "Rhesus."
- Recess?
May I have a definition, please?
A brownish yellow monkey of India.
Ah, rhesus.
R- H-E-S-U-S,
rhesus.
That's correct.
Number 54?

Woman:

Man:

I'm not sure if you're saying
imminent or eminent.
- Would you like a definition?

- That'd be cool.

Woman:

other things or places.

High; lofty...

eminent.

E- M-I-N-E-N-T,

- eminent?

- That's correct.

That's correct.

"Hypertrophic."

H- Y-P-E-R-T-R-O-P-H-I-C,

- hypertrophic.

- That's correct.

That's correct.

Woman:

Is that like a guy who
stands around in a hotel?

Man:

Speak into the mike, please.

And yes, it's a head porter
or doorkeeper.

Akeelah:

C- O-N-C-

I- E-R-G-E.

Man:

That's correct.

You're doing great!

I'm getting lucky.

- I could be getting words like-

- Polydactyl.

We're down to 11 spellers.

The top 10 qualify for
the Southern California regional finals.

In the next round-

- if you miss a word

do not leave the stage-

- as you may have an opportunity

to compete for any remaining places.

Kiana, get that baby out of here.

So...

Let's begin.

...L-L-O-G-I-Z-E, syllogize.

That's correct.

"Synecdoche."

Si-neck-do-kee?

Synecdoche.

You wanna tell me

what that means?

A figure of speech

in which a part is used for a whole;

an individual for a class;

a material for a thing;

or the reverse of any of these.

Man:

We need you to spell the word.

S...

I...

N...

E...

C...

D- O...

K- E-Y?

Synecdoche?

Woman:

The correct spelling is

S- Y-N-E-C-

D- O-C-H-E.

Man:

If you spell this correctly,

you'll be our 10th and last finalist.

Woman:

"Carmagnole. "

Could I get a definition, please?

A lively song and street dance.

Um...

C... A...

R...

M... A...

G- N-O-L-E,

carmagnole.

That's correct and that means
you are our 10th and last finalist
for the district bee.

They cheated!

They cheated!

I saw them!

That boy's mama helped him out.

Man:

What- excuse me.

- Who are you?

- I'm Keele's sister.

I was standing back there and I saw
that boy's mama give him the letter G.

She was saying "geeeee."

He knew the word!

I mean- it's one we studied.

- He knew it.

- Ma'am...

did you help your child

spell the word?

Ma'am, this is serious business.

Oh, you're damn right it's serious!

You are gonna give these kids ulcers!

Do you know how long

he has studied for this?

- He knew that word.

- No,

I didn't.

I'm sorry, number 62,

you are disqualified

from competition.

Which means, number 54,

if you can spell

one more word correctly

you'll be our 10th

and last finalist.

"Pastiche."

P- A-S-T-I-C-H-E,

pastiche.

That's correct.

That means you've qualified

for the Southern California

regional finals.

Here's my number. We have
a spelling club in my school, maybe you
- should come practice with us sometime.
- That sounds fun.

Yeah, it's cool. Hey, there's my folks.
I'll catch you later.

- Okay. Bye.
- Bye.

Hey, check it out- Look at this.
They're gonna be at USC this summer.
Just think, Akeelah, all you've got
to do is place in the top three
of the state regionals,
and you're going to Washington DC.
Not if I can't spell synecdoche.

Uh-oh, y'all, look.

I told you to wear a shirt and tie.

As long as you live in my house
- you do what I say. What did I say?

- Ma-
- No drugs, no gangbanging'-
- Why you stressing me?
- and no \$300 watches.

Take it off.

- Derrick-T gave me this. Yes.
- He did?
- Then I'm gonna give it right back.
- Mom?

What?!

You two get inside.

- Take it off.
- But, Mama, I made it.
- Made what?
- Made the cut.

I'm going to the regional bee.

While you're doing that, I'm gonna be
identifying your brother in the morgue.

- No you're not. Ma-
- Yes, I am. Get inside before
I really embarrass your behind.

- Akeelah?
- Akeelah, get in here!

It's okay, Mr. Welch.

I'll see you later.
Guess what.
I'm going to the regional bee.

Radio:

with medieval minds
The sober overdose,
poems roam like freight trains...

Dylan?

I'm Akeelah.

Javier said I can come
and join the study group today.

All those rejects do that.

My father coaches me privately.

Who's your coach?

- I don't got one.

- How many spelling bees have you won?

Just the one at my school.

Spell "xanthosis."

- Z-A-

- It starts with an X.

If that idiot hadn't

been caught cheating

you wouldn't have made the cut.

- "Euphoric."

- Euphoric is an adjective.

Origin Greek.

It means like

feeling great and everything.

Either spell the word

or take a shot.

If you miss either one you get a strike.

Three strikes, you're out.

Euphoric, E-U-

P- H-O-R-I-C...

euphoric.

"Psoriasis."

Are you taking Latin at your school?

Psoriasis is a noun, origin Greek.

Are you kidding? My school barely has
enough money for kickbaalls.

- There's no Latin classes.

- Latin helps you understand words.

Psoriasis is like itchy skin.

Maybe your mom could drive you
up here to take it with us.
I don't know. This is all
starting to sound real heavy.
It is heavy.
Spelling bees are serious shit.
I think I'll take a shot.
On second thought,
could I spell the word?
At Crenshaw they think I'm a freak.
Don't worry.
They think we're freaks here too.
Hey, there's my mom.
Need a ride?
Oh... naw.
My mom's gonna pick me up.
She should be here soon.
Hey, I'm having a birthday party
in a few weeks.
You want to come?
Maybe. If I can.
It was cool seeing you
again, Akeelah. Bye.
Bye.
Where the hell have you been?
- Studying.
- Studying where?
- Woodland Hills.
- Woodland Hills?
What you doing there?
They got a spelling club.
Did Mr. Welch take you?
'Cause ain't nobody call me.
I went by myself. I didn't think
the bus ride would take so long.
- I'm sorry.
- Akeelah Anderson!
You done lost your mind?
You 11 years old.
You don't be taking a bus
to Woodland Hills by yourself.
- There's nobody around to take me.
- That's 'cause I work.
That's what you said

on the weekend.
All the other kids have
their parents at the district bee.
Maybe the other kids have parents
who got more time on their hands.
Look, I'm not having another child
of mine disappearing at all hours.
So if this spelling thing means sneaking
off to the suburbs by yourself,
- I'm calling it all off.
- We can't call it off!
- I'm going to the regional bee.
- Not if you flunk out of school.
I just got a letter saying you gotta
take summer school to make up
- for all these classes you skipped.
- But, Mama, I hate Crenshaw!
It is so boring there
and nobody cares.
But you think they care about you
in Woodland Hills?
At least they got Latin classes
and the kids don't have to study
in their stairwells.
Good for them. But until you finish
summer school at Crenshaw
- ain't gonna be no more spelling bees.
- But, Mama, I got to get ready
for the state bee during the summer.
You just gonna have to do that
next year, now, aren't you?
- But that's not fair!
- Not only is it fair,
it's final.
You'd let me do it.
M- A-C-U-L-A-T-U-R-E.
Origin is Latin.
F- I-B-R-A-N-N-E. French.
V- I-V-I-S-E-P-U-L-T-U-R-E.
Latin.
I learned all the winning words
since 1925
just like you said I should.
Sorry for being

so insoIent Iast time.
That's not gonna happen no more.
Any... more.
I promise.
I was wondering if you might reconsider
coaching me for the state bee.
'Cause I need a coach.
Bad.
BadIy.
You need a coach badIy.
Come in.
Come in, come in.
That's a very pretty Iady.
Is she your wife?
Listen, you got very Iucky
at the district bee.
The competition at state Ievel
is much stronger.
So if you... and I were
to prepare for that,
we'd have to do it on my scheduIe.
So we'd have to work three hours
each morning starting at 9:00.
- Can you handIe that?
- WeII, I do have summer schooI.
But Mr. WeIch said working with you
couId take the pIace of it.
Isn't that for students who don't
perform satisfactoriIy during the year?
WeII, sometimes
it's for kids want to get ahead
- for next year.
- Yes, pIease put that down.
Just- yeah.
Have you-
have you got any goaIs?
- Hmm?
- Goais-
what wouId you Iike to be
when you grow up?
A doctor, a Iawyer,
a standup comic.
I don't know. The onIy thing
I'm good at is speIIing.

Go over there
and read the quotation
that's on the wall.
Read it aloud please.
"Our deepest fear is not
that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is that we
are powerful beyond measure.
We ask ourselves
'Who am I to be brilliant,
gorgeous,
talented and fabulous?'
Actually,
who are you not to be?
We were born to make manifest
the glory of God that is within us.
And as we let our own light shine,
we unconsciously give other people
permission to do the same."
Does that mean anything to you?
- I don't know.
- It's written in plain English.
What does it mean?
- That I'm not supposed to be afraid.
- Afraid of what?
Afraid of...
me?
This national spelling bee
is a tough nut.
I've seen it chew kids up
and spit them out.
So if you want to get there
you can't be a shrinking violet.
You have to stand up
and show them what you can do.
All right?
And I'll brook no nonsense.
You show up on time
with no attitude or it's over.
Agreed?
Agreed.
And baby, you should know
that you ain't...
Here it is, here it is.

Stop stop stop stop.
Girl, Mom would trip if she knew
we borrowed the car for this.
That's why Mama
ain't gonna know.
Come on, Georgia.
Um...
I'm gonna go
to the mall with Kiana.
But I thought you wanted
to go to this party.
Hey, Akeelah!
- Are you sure?
- Yeah.
Come on, let's go.
How are you?
Oh, thank you.

- Akeelah:

- My dad's friends with his dad.
I'm surprised he showed up.
Hey, you want to see my house?
- Yeah.
- Let's go.
This is my father's office.
He's a journalist and he's written
like a bunch of books.
What's your father do?
My daddy...
he used to work
for the city parks.
Man, you got a lot of friends.
I never had
a birthday party this big.
I'd think you'd have
lots of friends.
- Why'd you do that?
- I had an impulse.
Are you gonna sue me
for sexual harassment?
That was fun.
What are they doing down there?

Javier:

his Scrabble games.
Scrabble?

DyIan:

I get 30 seconds for each board.
We need one more.
Who wants to play?
I will.

Javier:

Roman scores 32 points
with "birch" on
the double-word score.
DyIan counters with the immediate
use of Z for 39 big ones.
PoIly tests the water
with "acorn. "
And DyIan answers with a body blow:
"beacon" for 20.
HoIy cannot.
Right off the bat,
Akeelah uses all her letters
getting 50 extra points
for a whopping 82.
What will DyIan do?
He's fighting the clock.
You could cut
the tension with a butter knife.
Shut up.
Shazam!
DyIan gets
his own bingo for 76 points.
It's come down to this.
After having crushed all five opponents,
DyIan has only Akeelah to beat.
But she's ahead by 21
and has only a few letters left.
Is this an upset in the making?
What kind of birthday party is this?
Yowza! Using the triple word score,
DyIan charges ahead by six.
Just go.
Booyah! Akeelah's in the lead by
But this could be DyIan's final play.

Arrivederci, sweetheart.
but DyIan gets
AkeeIah's Iast two points.
He wins a heartbreaker.
Wow, AkeeIah. No one ever
gets that cIose to beating DyIan.
But I didn't beat him.
GirI, you passed up the maII
to pIay ScrabbIe?

DyIan:

She just got Iucky.

Father:

bIack girI at a siIIy board game,
how do you expect
to win the nationaI bee?
Listen!
We're not coming in second
again this year.
We're going to win.
Let's go.

AkeeIah:

"He began to have a dim feeIing
that to attain his pIace in the worId
he must be himseIf
and not another."
Dr. Larabee,
this book is too heavy.
Good. It'II deveIop
your arm muscIes.
I thought we were deveIoping
my vocabuIary.
We are.
PIease continue reading.
But I aIready know most
of the words in this speech.
It's not a speech.
It's an essay.
By WEB DuBois,
the first bIack man
to receive a PhD
from Harvard University.

Maybe we should be
studying more big words.

- Spell "cabalistic."
- C-A-B-A-L-I-S-T-I-C,
- cabalistic.
- And when did you learn that one?

About two minutes ago
in this book.

But in the time it took
to learn that one word,
Dylan probably learned 20.
And those 20 words
won't mean anything to him.
He's just a little robot
memorizing lists of words.
The people we are studying:
DuBois, Dr. King, JFK,
these people used words
to change the world.

- ...the world-
- And they didn't acquire
their vocabulary
by rote memorization.

Okay.

But when I'm at the bee,
and they tell me to spell some
little fish from Australia
or some weird bacteria
on the moon,
we're gonna wish we'd done
a little bit more rote memorizing
and not so much essay reading...
if you don't mind me saying.
Bacteria don't exist on the moon.
Let me ask you something.
Where do you think
big words come from?
People with big brains.
All right, what do you see?
A bunch of big words
I don't know.
Ah, look again.
What kind of power
do we get from the sun?

- SoIar.
- So what does "soI" mean?
- Sun.
- What does "terraneous" sound Iike?
- Terrain.
- Meaning the earth.
"SoIiterraneous" means
the sun and the earth
working together.
So where do big words come from?
- LittIe words.
- And how many IittIe words do you know?
- Tons.
- Yes!
And there are tons more
for you to Iearn.
There are Greek ones.
There are Latin ones.
French ones.
And if you Iearn them aII,
you can speII any word,
no matter how big.
Maybe we shouId get back
to the essay reading.
What's the matter?
I thought you wanted to...
win the nationaI speIIing bee.
Maybe just getting there
this time is good enough.
Don't give me that.
You want to win it so badIy
it keeps you up at night.
Ever since you found out there was such
a thing as the nationaI speIIing bee
you've seen yourseIf
hoIding up that trophy,
but if you can't say it,
you can't win it. So say it.
- I want to win.
- Say it Iouder pIease.
- I want to win.
- You want to win what?
I want to win
the nationaI speIIing bee!

Good. Good.
You'll win using my methods.
By first understanding
the power of language,
then by deconstructing it,
breaking it down to its origins,
to its roots,
you'll consume it.
You will own it.
And then you know
what you'll be?
Mm-hmm.
Tired.
You'll be a champion.
- Are you ready?
- I'm ready.
All right, let's go.
Hand me down
my walking cane
Hand me down my hat
Hurry now and don't be late
'Cause we ain't got time to chat
You and me, we're going out
To catch the latest sounds
Guaranteed to blow your mind
So high you won't come down
Hey, ya'll prepare yourself
For the rubberband man
You never heard a sound
Like the rubberband man
You're bound to lose control
When the rubberband
starts to jam
Oh Lord, this dude
is out of sight
Everything he does
Seems to come out right
Once I went to hear them play
At a club outside of town
I was so surprised,
I was hypnotized...
Um, why are you home so early?
Just wasn't feeling well.
What you got there?

Homework.

You know, the regional bee
is coming up soon
and I was wondering
if you might want-

Is that gonna happen
in Beverly Hills too?

- I don't know.

- I told you,

you pass summer school then you can
start worrying about the spelling bee.

- But if you would-

- Akeelah.

Baby, I'm just not
in the mood, all right?

So how come

you don't teach anymore?

I told you I do teach. I-

I administer classes online.

Let's keep going.

- "Effervescent."

- E-F-F-

E- R-V-E-

S- E-N-T,

- effervescent.

- Come on, you know this word.

That dog's distracting me.

You're gonna have

much bigger distractions

when you get

to the national bee in DC.

Now what is that

you're doing with your hand, hmm?

What?

With your hand, your hand?

You- you- you-

- you tap, like that. What is that?

- I don't know.

So why do you got

all these toys for?

They belonged to my niece.

Oh. So you got

any kids of your own?

You ask a lot

of questions, don't you?
I'm naturally inquisitive.
Which is also sometimes confused
with being naturally obnoxious.
Here.

Let me see you jump rope.

- Just jump?
- Yes, just jump.

Is there a point to this?

Yes, there is.

Keep going.

I said keep going.

Concentrate.

Stay focused.

Spell effervescent. Don't think
about anything else. Come on.

Go.

E- F-F-E-

- R-V-E-S-

- Good!

C- E-N-T,

- effervescent.
- You see that? That's your trick.
- That's your mnemonic device.
- Jumping rope?

Keeping time, keeping time.

You see kids at the bee-
they do all kinds of things.

They- they sway back and forth.

They...

turn around,

turn around in circles.

Anything they have to do
to stay focused.

You keep time.

And I bet you

if you learned the words

while you kept time

you would remember them

even better.

...L-U-N-I-Z-E.

"Quamdiu."

- Q-U-A-M-D-I-U.

- Good.

Cognizant.

C- O-G-

N- I-Z-A-N-T.

Correct. "Tzigane."

T- Z-I-G-A-N-E.

Correct.

It's too bad your mother had
to work today, Akeelah.

Did she get to see the new dress?

Uh, yeah. She thought it was cool.

Oh, there goes Javier.

Woman:

This is a very exciting day for us here
because our top three spellers will be
representing Southern California
at the national spelling bee
in Washington DC.

Yes!

So what do you say?

Let's spell!

Well, Josh, you think
she's got a shot at it?

We'll see.

- "Alfresco."

- A-L-F-R-E-S-C-O,

- alfresco.

- That's correct.

Loquacious.

Espadrille.

Jambalaya.

Could you repeat
the word, please?

Mallorseismic.

M...

A- L...

O...

S- E...

I- S-M-I-C.

Mallorseismic is...

M- A-L-L-

O- S-E-I-S-M-I-C.

It's all right.

It's all right.

Boy:

D- O-U-B-L-U-R-E.

That's correct.

"Psalmody."

Akeelah:

Definition please.

- Psalmody means the practice...

- Mrs. Anderson.

...or art of of singing in psalms.

I want my daughter

off that stage right now.

P- S-A-

I don't care what she said.

I want her off that stage.

I didn't know she was here

and I didn't give her permission-

- L-M-O-

- I'm sorry, Mrs. Anderson.

No, I told her she was

expressly not to be here.

And you don't take my child anywhere

without my permission.

D- Y, psalmody.

That's correct.

All right, next please.

Excuse me. I'm sorry.

The mother of one of the spellers

needs to speak with her.

- It's rather urgent.

- Um...

Okay, but she must be

back on the stage

before her next turn

or she'll be disqualified.

She'll be back.

I swear we thought you were on board

with this, Mrs. Anderson.

You want to tell me

what the heck is going on here?

Because I never signed

a consent form.

- I signed Daddy's name.

- You did what?!

How do you think I felt
when Javier's mother calls me
to see if I need a ride to USC?
I don't know who she is
or what she's talking about.
I'm sorry, Mama.
I just wanted to do the bee.
By lying? By going behind
my back for the last six months?
You might as well say goodbye
to your little friends, Akeelah,
because this is your last
spelling bee.
I beg you, Mrs. Anderson,
to reconsider this.
- She deserves this opport-
- Bob.
Mrs. Anderson's right.
Akeelah does not deserve to go
to the bee this year.
What?
Next speaker please.
Come on up to the mike please.
A little faster. Come on.
I apologize, Mrs. Anderson,
if we've contributed to any anguish
you may be feeling.
And who are you exactly?
My name is Joshua Larabee, ma'am.
And I've been-
well, I've been helping Akeelah
prepare herself
for the spelling bee.
Akeelah's been getting extra school
credit for working with Dr. Larabee.
We designed an entire program
specifically for her.
Why didn't you tell me about this?
Mama, I hated going
behind your back,
but every time I brought up the bee,
you didn't want to hear it.
I didn't know what to do.

Can I get the pronunciation again?

He's given it to you five times.

You need to spell the word.

Could you use it in a sentence?

He's already used it in a sentence.

I mean a different sentence
than you used before.

- You only get one sentence.

- What's up with this kid?

You must want this thing pretty bad
because you ain't
never lied to me before in your life.

So maybe you can tell me
what you think

a good punishment would be
for what you did.

- I guess I gotta miss the bee.

- But that don't just punish you.

Mr. Welch and Dr. Larabee done put
a lot of time into this too.

So you think of something else.

Maybe double chores
for the month.

For the next three months.

She still got time to get
back up on that stage?

If we move very quickly, yes.

Well, I guess you'd
better get a move on.

We haven't much time.

Come on, come on.

Thank you, Mama.

All right.

- Dr. Larabee, is it?

- Yes.

So you actually think
Akeelah has a chance
to win the national spelling bee?

Yes.

Yes, I think she does.

Well...

- could you use it in a song?

- What?

Never mind. Ratatouille:

R- A-T-A-T-O-U-I-L-L-E, ratatouiiiie.

Uh... that's correct.

- Where's number 73, please?

- She's here, she's here.

Number 73.

- Thank you.

- I was about to start tap dancing.

Man:

Okay, "pIuviousity. "

Can I get a definition please?

PIuviousity means a state
characterized by much rain.

PIuviousity:

P- L-U-V-I-O-S-I-T-Y,

- pIuviousity.

- That's correct.

Thank you.

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Find out what it means to me

R-E-S-P-E-C-T

Take care, TCB

Oh, a little respect...

I'd like to thank you all

for coming out today

to honor our own

Akeelah Anderson!

Um...

thanks...

a lot.

Oh girl, you like

a movie star now.

I know.

It's pretty crazy.

Hey, my mama said she want

to take us out to celebrate tonight.

Javier's parents are taking me out.

- But maybe we can-

- Akeelah, excuse me. I'm sorry.

There's a reporter here

and she wants to talk to you.

- I don't want to talk to no reporter.

- Are you kidding?

This is exactly the kind of good publicity Crenshaw needs.

Excuse us! Sorry.

Hi, this is Lauren Sanchez reporting from South Los Angeles.

I'm here with 11-year-old Akeelah Anderson.

She's a seventh grader from Crenshaw Middle School who's heading to the national spelling bee. How does it feel now that you're going to be going to Washington DC?

- It's pretty cool.

- Are you excited?

All right, let's check out the word that Akeelah spelled here at the Southern California finals that got her to the national bee.

Erythrocyte:

- **Joshua:**

- Affen-what?

"G-r-a-t-i-o-r-i-a-l."

- G-R-A-L-A-T-

- Wrong.

- "Jacquard."

- Dr. Larabee.

Spell the word jacquard.

- J-A-Q-U-

- What about the C?

These are all words that were missed in last year's national spelling bee.

- And you can't spell one of them.

- Maybe because we haven't

- studied them yet.

- Why did you cancel yesterday?

Hmm?

Were you doing another interview, flaunting yourself in front of the television cameras?

No, I was at the mall.

Look, I wasn't dissing you.

I was Christmas shopping.
"Dissing"? I thought we didn't
use words like that.
I thought we only used words
from the dictionary in here.
"Dis, dissed, dissing:
to treat with disrespect
or contempt;
to find fault with. "
New words get added
to the dictionary every year.
Look, I didn't get
to the national bee
until I was 14 years old.
I had no help.
I had no training.
I had nothing.
By the time I got
to the third round, I was out.
You have an opportunity
to win this thing.
But all we've done
for eight months
is study words.
Why can't we take a break,
go to a movie, to a basketball game?
Why can't we have fun?
I told you, Denise,
you can have fun after the bee.
Who's Denise?
What?
Denise, you called me Denise.
Who's that?
Dr. Larabee, are you okay?
Yes.
Yes, I'm fine.
Listen, I spent all last week
making these for you.
- What are they?
- They're flash cards.
that you will run into at the finals.
got a few months left.
- What, you going to coach me 24-7?
- Uh, no...

you're going to, um,
I learn these on your own.
There's nothing left
for me to teach you.
What?
You- you've got it all, Akeelah.
You've got word construction down
etymology,
memorization techniques.
What you need to do now is just
focus on the words.
I can't learn 5,000 new words
all by myself.
Oh, yes, you can.
You've got a brain like a sponge.
- You just sit down and you study them.
- Dr. Larabee, I swear, I promise-
I won't miss any more sessions
and I'll do whatever you say.
You can't stop coaching me now.
I told Mr. Welch I'd get you through
the regionals and I've done that.
Now, I don't have anything else
I can teach you.
You need to just
take those words
and study them
and you'll be all right.
This is why I was at the mall.
Merry Christmas.

- **Georgia:**

- **Akeelah:**

- What you doin'?

- Watching TV.

You want to go skating
this weekend?

Why don't you go with your friends
from Woodland Hills?

What?

Girl, what's wrong with you?

Nothing.

I got homework to do.

I'll see you later.

Kiana:

Hey, KeeIie!

KeeIie, come on out here!

GirI, you on TV.

- Hurry. Come on, Iook!

- AkeeIah Anderson's rise
has captivated her community.

AIi of Los AngeIes is taIking about her.

If she wins this speIIing bee
it's going to be Iike

- everybody in the neighborhood wins.

- I think it'll be reaI positive.

You know-

good for the community.

I'm aIready studying
for next year's bee.

What is wrong with-

AkeeIah, what's wrong?

- I don't want to do the bee no more.

- You don't want to do the bee?

- Why not?

- Dr. Larabee don't want
to coach me no more,
Georgia don't want to hang out with me
and aII these peopIe are
expecting me to win.

And it's just too hard, Mama.

I want it aII to stop.

- Baby, you worked so-

- PIease.

- PIease.

- AII right, aII right.

I certainIy didn't mean
to upset her. I-

weII, I honestIy thought I was
doing the best thing for her.

You know, Dr. Larabee,
my chiId is onIy 11 years oId
and she has been through
so much aIready.

Her father was kiIIed
when she was six.

Somebody shot him
on his way home from work.
Do you have any idea what it's like
for a girl to lose her father that way?
I can imagine.
Then why do you want
to cause this child any more grief?
That's an unfair accusation,
Mrs. Anderson.
As I've told you, I'm-
I'm just not in a place
where I can
be of any more help
to Akeelah right now.
But she needs you.
She does.
I beg to differ, Mrs. Anderson.
It's not me that Akeelah needs.

Girl on TV:

to take us out to the ballgames,
and take us to the movies
and we'd have popcorn fights.

Woman on TV:

We'll do that again.
Sure.
I want to tell you something.
You know why I didn't want you
to do the bee at first?
'Cause I saw that video of yours
and I saw one winner
and 200 losers.
And I didn't want you to be
one of those losers.
Did you know your mama
went to college
right after high school?
No.
I had a scholarship.
I was gonna be a doctor.
What happened?
I just felt so out of place
at that school.

I convinced myself
that I was gonna fail.
So before that could happen,
I dropped out.
I don't want you to do
the same thing with this bee.
"Gabbro,"
a group of dark heavy rocks.
Can you spell it for me?
G- A-B-R-O,
gabbro?
Actually it's got two Bs.
You know, Akeelah, you ain't short
on people who want to help you.
I bet if you just look around,
you got 50,000 coaches.
Starting with me.
- Mama?
- Hmm?
You think that maybe
you might go back to college?
I just might.
- I love you.
- I love you too.
I love you too.
"Craquelure,"
C- R-A-Q-U-E-L-U-
Hey, yo, so why y'all punking out
on the spelling bee, huh?
What, you afraid of all
the suburbia kids now?
No.
Hey!
So how you spell
all these words anyway?
- I study them.
- Whatever.
There go my ride.
- Hey, what up, Derrick-T?
- What up, Terrence?
Who dat?
That ain't nobody,
just my little sister.
What up, little thing?

I been seeing you on TV.
Trying to win some big contest, huh?
Answer the man.
You know, I won something once...
fifth grade.
I wrote a poem.
Even got myseIf
a bIue ribbon too.
- Yeah, good. You wrote yourseIf a poem.
- Shut up, dawg.
What you think rap is?
- What's that in your hand?
- Ain't nothin', just some stupid word.
- You heIping her?
- Naw, man, I'm chiIling wit you, right?
Naw, man.
- Stay here and heIp your sis.
- Why?
'Cause I say so.
Let's break out, man.
- Derrick-T!
- What's up?
I want to read your poem.
After you win the contest.
Let's go, man.
You ain't gotta heIp me
if you don't want to.
"En-fran-chis-ment"?
- You mean enfranchisement?
- Hey, whatever.
Can you speII it?
E- N-F-R...
Wake up, everybody
No more sIeeping in bed
No more backward thinking
Time for thinking ahead
The worId has changed
so very much
From what it used to be...
"Ap-teery-goat-ti."
- What?
- That right there.
Apterygote. Maybe you
shouIdn't show me the cards.

Oh yeah. Sorry.
Wake up aII the teachers
Time to teach a new way
Maybe then they'II Iisten
To what you have to say
'Cause they're the ones
who's coming up
And the worId
is in their hands
When you teach the chiIdren
Teach them
the very best you can...
...R-E-S-A-
You go, AkeeIah, baby!
Make us proud!
But I had some heIp.
You shouId be
very weII prepared then.
You know, Dr. Larabee,
when I was a IittIe girI...
my daddy died.
I used to cry aII the time.
But then...
I found something that heIped.
What was that?
I speIIed- over and over again.
And I'd feeI better.
Maybe when you're
thinking of her...
you can try speIIing.
It might heIp.
AkeeIah?
- Who toId you?
- You did.
You caIIed me

by her name:

That's her jump rope, isn't it?
Yes.
Was she your IittIe girI?
Yes.
What happened to her?
She got very sick.
She was onIy a coupIe of years

younger than you
when she passed.
Where is her mama?
She moved to another city and-
after it happened
my wife...
Patricia and I
found it-
sLowly
became very
difficuIt to be-
Anyway, this is-
this is Patricia's garden.
You see, I need-
I need a lot of order in my life.
That's why I don't teach
in the classrooms anymore.
It's just too unpredictable.
Like you.
This whole spelling bee business
now has become...
a little too unpredictable as well.
Dr. Larabee...
I- I can't go to DC without you.
Yes, you can, Akeelah.
You can do anything you want.
- I can't beat Dylan.
- Don't say that.
It's true. It doesn't matter
how many words I learn.
He'll always know more.
Let me tell you about Dylan.
There's only one person
who can push him
to spell as well as he possibly can.
It's not his dad.
It's not the spelling bee people.
It's not even himself.
That person is you.
So...
when you and I
get to DC,
let's make sure we give him
a run for his money.

Okay?

Hey.

Hi.

I'm off to DC tomorrow.

- Yeah, well, have fun.

- I'm sorry I've been so busy.

It's just this whole spelling thing's been real intense.

But you know what?

I'd give it all up if it meant you and me could hang again.

- That's stupid.

- Why's it stupid?

'Cause people want to see you do good.

I want to see you do good.

You know what?

Georgia, you're my best friend.

And you always tell me I can do things even when I think I can't.

But I gotta tell you something.

If you want to be a flight attendant, you first gotta ride on a plane.

I will someday.

How about tomorrow?

Whoo!

Girl, I got- I got to talk to the captain.

Oh, forget flight attendant.

I'm gonna be a pilot.

- What's wrong with him?

- He has an aversion to heights.

It's an aversion to plummeting.

I may puke.

My brother's in the air force and he says that fear is all in your head. Here.

He gave me this for good luck.

Don't worry- I won't impale you.

You know, I never really thanked you for helping me at the state bee.

- No biggie.

- Actually,

it was very chivalrous.

Wow.

I'm not thinking about the plane
at all now.

Well, in that case...

Behind all of your tears

There's a smile

Behind all of the rain

There's sunshine

For miles and miles

Oh, everything

Everything

You mean everything

Everything to me

Everything to me

Everything to me.

- I told you not to shake it.

- I'm sorry.

Akeelah, I thought you guys
were supposed to be studying.

- We are.

- Huh-uh,

it sounds like a party in here.

Come on, you got a big day tomorrow.

- Better call it a night.

- Half an hour more.

What do you think

Dylan's doing now?

Trying to learn ancient Greek.

- Maybe we should invite him over.

- That turd-juggler? Forget it.

I'll be back.

- Yeah-

- Is Dylan here?

- He's busy.

- Well, um...

me and some of the other kids
are hanging out in my room,
drinking soda pop and watching movies.
We thought maybe he'd like to come over.
I'm sorry, but tomorrow
is the spelling bee.

Well, you know, sometimes it's okay
to take a little rest
right before the big event, you know?

WeII, perhaps that is your strategy,
but not ours.
Wait wait!
This is for DyIan.
Okay.

Joshua:

that we are inadequate.
Our deepest fear is
that we are powerfuI
beyond measure.
We ask ourseIves 'Who am I
to be briIIiant, gorgeous,
taIented and fabuIous?'
ActuaIIy, who are you not to be?"
It's okay. There.
I'm Ted Saunders, here with
Katie Kerwin-McCrimmen,
broadcasting Iive from the main baIIroom
of the Grand Hyatt, Washington.
Now, Katie, as a former speIIing bee
champ yourseIf, who do you think
we shouId be looking for to do weII
in this year's competition?
Several of the kids pIaced
very high in Iast year's bee,
especiaIIy DyIan Chiu.
He's come in second
two years in a row.
Kick his butt, AkeeIah!
B- U-T-T, butt.
...but the speIIer I've reaIIy got
my eye on is IittIe AkeeIah Anderson
from Los AngeIes. She's become
a bit of a media sensation
- because she's onIy 11 years oId...
- That's my sister!
...and it's her first try
at the speIIing bee circuit.
CouId you repeat the word pIease?
"Ratiocinate, ratiocinate."
What in the heII
kind of word is that?
R- A-T-

I- O-C-

I- N-A-T-E,

- ratiocinate.

- That's correct.

Yes.

Ted:

that is just amazing.

Katie:

one wrong letter and that's it.

"Oersted. "

- What's the language of origin?

- It's from a Danish name.

- I can't stand this Korean kid.

- He's Chinese.

- He's uppity.

- O-E-R-S-T-E-D.

That's correct.

- What's the definition?

- Xylem is a complex tissue

in the vascular system

of higher plants.

Xylem.

X- Y-L-E-M, xylem.

That's correct.

They thought they had me,

but I was too much for 'em.

...T-H-O-E-P-Y,

- orthoepy.

- That's correct.

- Etymology is originally Latin.

- Could you use it in a sentence please?

- Etymology.

- Can I have a definition please?

- That's correct.

- "Lobscouse."

- The language of origin, please.

- Any alternate pronunciations?

- Gostromyth.

- May I have a definition please?

- Latin.

- Escharotic.

- Madrigal.

- That is correct.
- May I have the definition please?
- From earliest known time.
- Aboriginally.
- Correct.
- Language of origin?
- Yes!

Empileomania.

Any ratio without separation
of two phases.

...I-B-L-E, miscible.

Katie:

we're here in the eighth round
of the national spelling bee
with only 30 spellers remaining.

...U... R...

S- U-S, excursus.

"Argillaceous."

- Excuse me?
- Argillaceous.

Can I have the definition please?
Argillaceous means of, relating to,
or containing clay
or clay minerals.

- May I have the language of origin?
- Latin.

Man, that's a white word if I ever
heard one. It's a trick- stop playing.

Katie:

trip up most people.

They would tend
to spell it T-I-O-U-S,
or C-I-O-U-S.

Is it derived from the Latin word
argilla, meaning clay?

That's correct.

A- R-G-

I- L-

L- A...

Come on.

- Can I start over?
- You may.

But you cannot change the letters
you've already spelled.

A- R-G-I-L-L-

A- C-E-O-U-S,

- argillaceous.

- That's correct.

She got it!

That's my little sister!

Well, it's the 12th round, folks,

and the five remaining spellers

are Mary Calveretti, age 12;

13-year-old Rajeeve Subramonian;

12-year-old Javier Mendez;

Dylan Chiu, also of Woodland Hills.

Wow, they really crank them

out down there, don't they?

Of course, Akeelah Anderson.

Could you use the word

in a sentence please?

The Merovingian kings were known

for having long red hair.

Okay. Uh...

M...

A- R-O-

V- I-N-G-I-A-N,

Merovingian.

Merovingian is spelled

M- E-R-O-V-I-N-G-I-A-N.

I forgot to spell it how it sounds.

Next year I'll take it all.

Now it's your turn.

...I-S-M, mithridatism.

...P-I-S-C-N-C-E,

- resipiscence.

- That's correct.

...F-I-R-E?

Vitrophyre?

...G-I-N-O-U-S,

- serpiginous.

- That's correct.

Yes!

That's my baby.

We're going to take a small break

before Akeelah and Dylan

commence with
the championship-level words.
Pretty good, huh?
Make sure you stay focused, right?
This is your last
national spelling bee.
If you lose to that girl,
you're second place your whole life.
No way! You hear me?
- No way!
- Peeking on someone?
Just wishing Dylan good luck.
You've done a superb job.
I am so proud of you.
Now listen, they're going to hit you
with every trick word they've got.
You just remember
the things that we've studied.
You can take these words apart
even if you've never seen them, right?
But if I don't beat Dylan,
I've still got next year, right?
Well, of course you do.
Although I don't know
how much time
we'll have to train together.
I've been asked to come back
and teach at UCLA, and I've said yes.
- Really?
- Well, far be it from me to deny
the next WEB DuBois the benefits
of my acerbic wit and sour disposition.
- What's the matter?
- Nothing, Dr. Larabee.
I should get back.
No matter what happens...
I want you to know that I couldn't
have gotten this far without you.
Akeelah, baby, there you are.
Come on.
I gotta go.
They're about to start up again.
Don't look so nervous.
I hear she had a pretty good coach.

You know, I just found out that the bee only gives each kid two plane tickets.

I was wondering how we ended up with six.

Uh...

perhaps it was some unexpected largess on the part of the bee.

Or perhaps Akeelah's coach is also pretty generous.

Thanks.

For everything.

- You're welcome.

- Ladies and gentlemen, let's welcome Akeelah and Dylan back to the stage.

Ted:

if either speaker misses a word, the other has to spell that missed word

- plus another to win, right?

- Katie:

And we could exhaust all 25 championship words.

But it's never happened.

The championship words are just too difficult.

- "Filipinistic."

- Can I have the definition please?

Of, or relating to,

an often excessive

reverence

of ancestors or tradition.

Filipinistic:

F- I-

L- I...

Akeelah, you're up.

"Xanthosis."

- Xanthosis?

- It starts with an X.

Miss Anderson?

Xanthosis:

Z- A-N-

T- H-O-

S- I-S...

xanthosis.

DyIan, it's your turn.

"Xanthosis."

Xanthosis:

X- A-N-

T- H-O-S...

E- S, xanthosis.

Xanthosis is speIIed

X- A-N-

T- H-O-S-I-S.

Can I get some water, pIease?

Can we pIease get

both speIIers some water?

- What are you doing?

- What are you doing?

- You just threw that word.

- So did you.

You're just gonna

give this aII away?

Your dad wiII be happy.

Who cares? He's never

won anything in his Iife.

I won the regionaIs

three times in a row.

And I finished second

in the nationaIs twice.

And now you can finish first.

I couId do it next year.

- You do your best this year.

- DyIan-

You do your best...

or I don't want it.

Man:

Here's your water.

That's kind of amazing, isn't it,

that both of these incredible speIIers

wouId stumble on that word?

I think we've got some
pretty nervous kids up there.

"Effleurage" or "effleurage."

E- F-F-L-E-U-

R- A-G-E,

- effleurage.

- That's correct.

Ted:

two star tennis players

at the net returning volleys.

I mean, these kids are incredible.

Lagniappe:

Lagniappe.

- Sumpsimus.

- Could you use it in a sentence please?

- Is that a verb?

- Opheimity.

- Traitoritious.

- That is correct.

- Sophrosyne.

- Parrhesia.

- Is that Greek?

- Was that Latin?

- What's the language...

- ...of origin please?

- Lyophilize.

- Zarzuela.

- Vibrissae.

- Craquelure.

That's correct.

Ted:

these super-tough words

like they were breakfast cereal.

Katie:

actually go the distance,

and most people

consider that unthinkable.

We're now 13 words

into the championship level.

If you make it through the remaining

That's never happened before.

- Vinegarroon.
- Ecdysis.
- Concitato.
- Puerpera.

That's correct.

Ted:

trying to stage a miracle here.

Katie:

they need each other to succeed.

...E-R-A-Z...

A- D-I-A-N,

- Scheherazadian.
- That's correct.

Akeelah:

...L-O-G-I...

C- A-L, palynological.

That's correct.

Judge:

Ladies and gentlemen, we are down

to the final

two championship words.

One or both of our spellers

will walk away

with the first place trophy.

Dylan, you're up.

- "Logorrhea."

- May I have the definition please?

Logorrhea is excessive

and often incoherent

talkativeness.

Logorrhea:

L...

O...

G- O...

R...

R- H...

E- A, logorrhea?

Judge:

Congratulations, Dylan,
you've won the Scripps
National Spelling Bee.

Yes! Yes!

Go get 'em.

Ladies and gentlemen,
please be seated for Akeelah's turn.

"Pudchritude."

Pudchritude.

It's derived from
the Latin word "pudcher,"
meaning beautiful,

- isn't it?

- That's correct.

- P-

- U-

- L-

- C-

- H-

- R-

- I-

- T-

- U-

- D-

- E.

- Pudchritude.

Congratulations, Akeelah.

That's what I'm talking about!

Akeelah:

where everything feels right?

Where you don't have to worry
about tomorrow

or yesterday,

but you feel safe and know

you're doing the best you can?

There's a word for that feeling.

It's called love.

L- O-V-E.

And it's what I feel for all my family,

and all my coaches

in my neighborhood,

where I come from,

where I learned how to spell.
We did it.
Write it down
a thousand times
Four-letter word
that makes me cry
How I feel about it
I can't decide
No, I don't know,
so I'll improvise
Is it living in our heart?
Or in our mind?
I don't know
So, World, ready or not
Here I go
Searching for the answer
And I'm not gonna stop
Till I find
where it lingers inside me
How does it come to be?
What should it mean to me?
Teach me the definition
Of true love
I was so afraid
I'd never succeed
But you made me feel
I could do anything
Memorize the things
we would say and do
Must be the love and the strength
that I found in you
Is it living in our heart?
Or in our mind?
I don't know
So, World, ready or not
Ooh, here I go,
searching for the answer
And I'm not gonna stop
Till I find
where it lives inside me
How does it come to be?
What should it mean to me?
Teach me the definition
Of true love

Love onlY feeIs good
True Iove aIways beLieves
And it gives way
the boundaries
WiIIing to sacrifice
unconditionaIIy
So, WorId, ready or not
Oh, here I go
Searching for the answer
And I'm not gonna stop
TiII I find
where it Iives inside of me
How does it come to be?
What shouId it mean to me?
Teach me the definition
- Of true Iove
- So, WorId, ready or not
- Here I go, oh, yeah yeah
- Here I go
- Searching for the answer
- And I'm not gonna stop
TiII I find
where it Iives inside me
- How does it come to be?
- How does it come to be?
- What shouId it mean to me?
- What shouId it mean?
Teach me the definition
Of true Iove.

AkeeIah:

Thank you.
I ain't too young to know
That Iife has its highs and Iows
And things won't aIways
Turn out quite Iike I think
And though
I have much to Iearn
To weather
the twists and turns
I know that I'm capabIe
To deaI with what Iife
brings me
I'm strong, I'm ready

To be on my own
Let me spread my wings
Let me go
Don't hold so tight
'Cause I can fly alone
I need you to trust me
Have faith and let me
Make it on my own
Please let me
Your baby
Go.
Still so many answers
I don't know
There are so many answers
Realize that to question
Is how we grow
To question is to grow
So I step out of the ordinary
I can feel my soul ascending
I'm on my way
Can't stop me now
You can do the same
Yeah
What have you done today
to make you proud?
To make you proud, yeah
Let me hear you,
Let me hear you
Let me hear you,
so what have you done today
To make you feel proud?
Yeah yeah yeah yeah!
'Cause you could be
so many people
If you make that bid
for freedom
So what have you done today
to make you feel proud?
What have you done today
- To make you feel proud?
- Yeah, let me hear you
What have you done today?
What have you done today?
What have you done today

To make you feel proud?
Oh yeah yeah yeah yeah.