

The Spelling Bee

Word Count: 771

Connections

Writing

Pretend that you are Jasmine. Write an apology letter to Finn. Include why you are sorry and how you will try not to hurt other people's feelings in the future.

Spelling and Vocabulary

Have a class spelling bee using the words in the book's glossary.

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Written by Jill Sherman
Illustrated by Laura Zarrin

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Words to Know

apology
arrogant
auditorium
competition
fail

glaring
quizzically
spelling bee
sympathetically

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“Looks like we’re down to our final two spellers!” Mr. Russo exclaimed.

Jasmine beamed. She was sure she was going to win the class **spelling bee**.

“Good luck,” Finn, the other speller, said and offered Jasmine a handshake.

“Luck has nothing to do with it,” she said smugly. Blushing, Finn lowered his hand.

“All right,” Mr. Russo said. “Finn, your next word is **apology**.”

Finn took a deep breath. “Apology,” he repeated nervously. “A-P-O-L-A-G-Y. Apology.”

Mr. Russo frowned **sympathetically** and said, “I’m afraid that’s incorrect. Jasmine, let’s see if you can spell this word for the win.”



“Apology. A-P-O-L-O,” she said, stressing the letter Finn missed, “G-Y. Apology.”

“You got it!” Mr. Russo cheered.

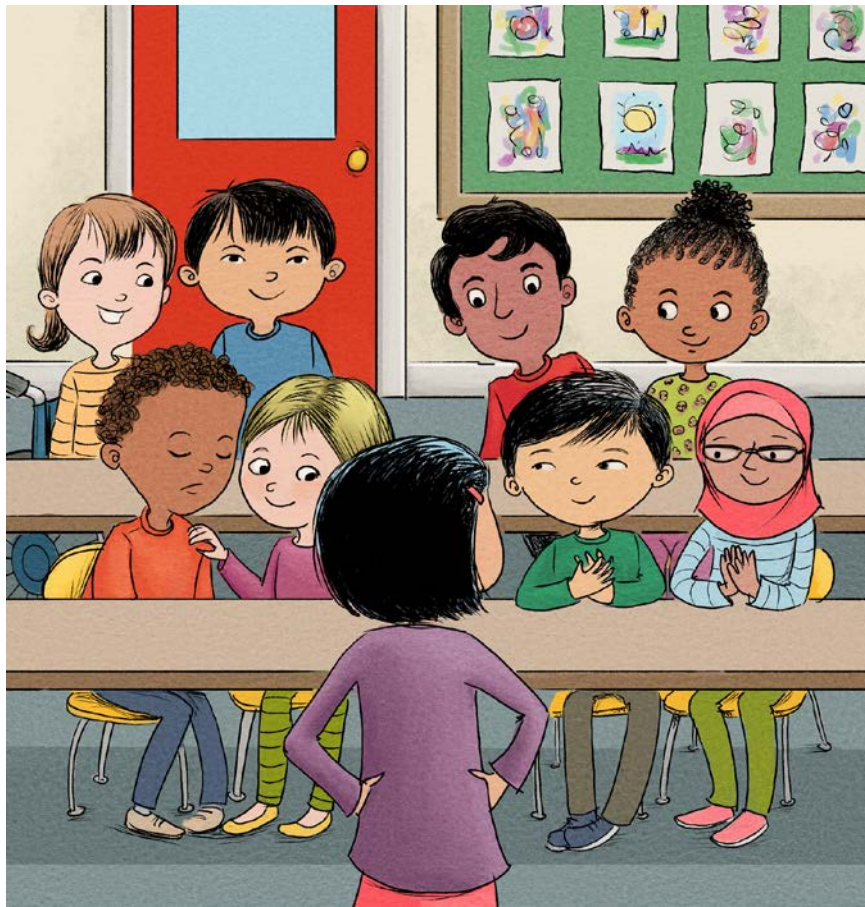
Then, he asked Jasmine to spell one final word—**arrogant**.

After she spelled it correctly, Mr. Russo announced, “Class, let’s have a hand for our new spelling champ!”

The class erupted in applause.

Mr. Russo said, "Jasmine, you'll represent our class at the school-wide spelling bee tomorrow. Do you think you're up to it?"

"Oh, yes, Mr. Russo," she replied.



During lunch, everyone was talking about the spelling bee. Jasmine walked by the table where Finn sat with his friends.

"I can't believe you're going to go onstage in front of the entire school," Lilly gushed. "That's a big deal!"

"How hard is it to spell a few words?" Jasmine asked.

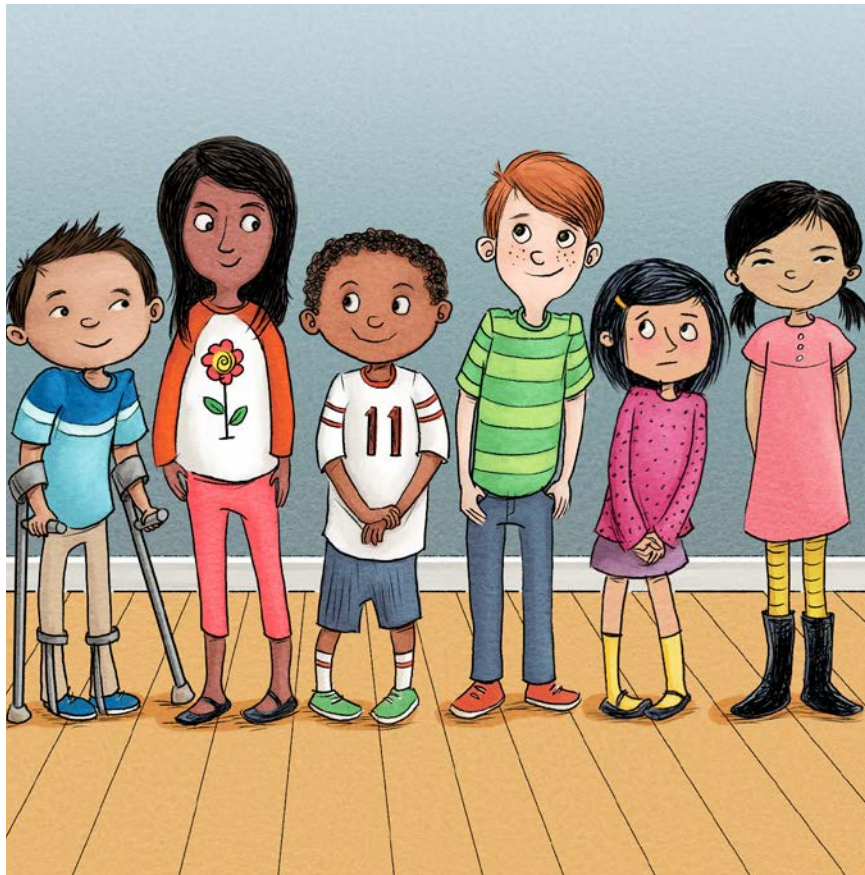
"Easy for you to say," Finn said. "You beat all of us."

"Well, you all only had to spell baby words," Jasmine announced.

Before they could say anything, she said, "See you guys L-A-T-E-R."

The next day, Jasmine waited with the spelling bee winners from the other classes. She had not thought about the older students she would have to spell against in the school-wide spelling bee.

She found a spot next to a fourth grader she knew from her block.



“Hi, Josh. I didn’t know you were a good speller,” Jasmine said.

“I think I have a shot at winning this year,” he said.

“Me too!” Jasmine said eagerly.

“Aren’t you in second grade?” Josh asked.

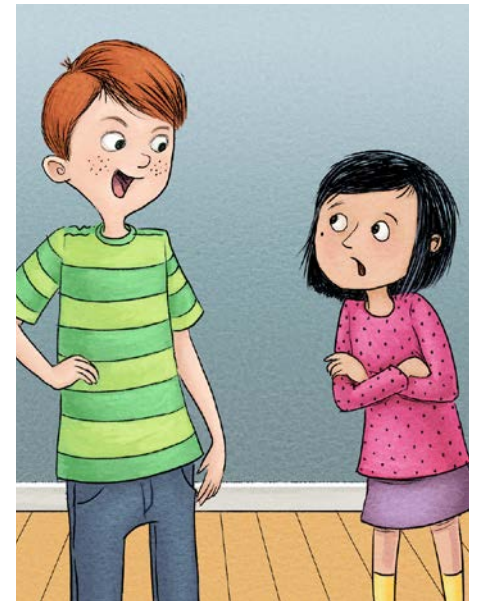
“Second graders never win the school-wide spelling bee.”

“Well, I’m pretty good,” Jasmine bragged.

“I won my class bee on the word *apology*.”

Josh looked at her **quizzically** and said, “*Apology*? That’s kind of a baby word, isn’t it?”

Jasmine blushed.



Maybe I should have studied the list of words Mr. Russo gave the class, she thought.

Principal Lopez started to explain the rules of the spelling bee.

“Congratulations to all our super spellers!” she began.

Jasmine wasn’t listening. If *apology* was a baby word, what kinds of words would she be asked to spell?



The **auditorium** was packed for the **competition**. Jasmine sat nervously onstage with the other spellers, her palms sweating.

Principal Lopez introduced each of the spellers. Cheers from each student’s classmates arose in different areas of the auditorium. When Jasmine’s name was announced, most of Mr. Russo’s class clapped for her. Jasmine looked at Finn. He wasn’t clapping. He seemed to be **glaring** at her.

As the competition began, Jasmine eyed each speller. Student after student stepped forward and spelled his or her word correctly. Jasmine knew some of the words, but not all of them.

Finally, it was her turn. Jasmine walked to the front of the stage and crossed her fingers, hoping for a word she knew.



“Jasmine, please spell *caterpillar*,” said Principal Lopez.

Jasmine’s heart sank. She’d never spelled this word before. Taking a deep breath, Jasmine tried to sound it out.



She said, “Caterpillar. C-A-T,” Jasmine paused and then continued, “E-R-P,” but she wasn’t sure what came next. She hesitated, trying to think. “I-L-E-R. Caterpillar,” she finished.

“I’m sorry, but that’s incorrect,” said Principal Lopez.



Jasmine returned to her chair.

That was it. She was out on her first word. She couldn't believe it. Yesterday she'd been sure she could win the whole competition.

Jasmine looked out into the audience and spotted Finn. *Now I know how he felt,* she thought.

After the competition, Jasmine opened the classroom door quietly, hoping to slip in unnoticed.



"Way to go, Jasmine!" Lilly said.

"Yeah, bad luck on that word," Finn sympathized.

"You're not mad at me after everything I said yesterday?" Jasmine asked.

"I'm really sorry for being mean," she said quietly.



“It’s all right—besides, it was really brave to go up against those older students,” Finn replied.

“Thanks, Finn. Now I understand how you felt yesterday. It’s okay to **fail**, but it’s not okay to be mean about it,” Jasmine said. “You never know how others feel until you’re in their shoes,” she added.

Finn looked at his shoes and laughed.

Glossary

- apology** (*n.*) an expression of regret for a mistake or an action that hurts someone (p. 3)
- arrogant** (*adj.*) having the attitude that one is better than others (p. 4)
- auditorium** (*n.*) the part of a building where people watch a performance (p. 10)
- competition** (*n.*) a rivalry for something desired (p. 10)
- fail** (*v.*) to not succeed (p. 15)
- glaring** (*v.*) staring angrily (p. 10)
- quizzically** (*adv.*) in an amused or slightly confused manner (p. 8)
- spelling bee** (*n.*) a competition in which people spell words (p. 3)
- sympathetically** (*adv.*) in a way that shows pity for or understanding of another person’s situation (p. 4)