



INDIANA REPERTORY THEATRE

CHRISTEL DEHAAN

STUDENT MATINEE PROGRAM

at the Indiana Repertory Theatre



STUDY GUIDE FOR

THE 25TH ANNUAL

PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

MUSIC AND LYRICS BY WILLIAM FINN, BOOK BY RACHEL SHEINKIN, CONCEIVED BY REBECCA FELDMAN

PRESENTED BY GLICK PHILANTHROPIES

September 25 - October 9, 2024 | OneAmerica Financial Stage



THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE

— music and lyrics by William Finn, book by Rachel Sheinkin, conceived by Rebecca Feldman



Content Spotlight

The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee contains:

Profanity and blasphemy, descriptions of puberty, modern social-political commentary

For more information, contact:
 Anna Barnett
 Education Manager
 education@irtlive.com
 317.916.4841
 140 W. Washington Street
 Indianapolis, Indiana 46204
 irtlive.com

EDITOR
 Richard J Roberts
 Resident Dramaturg

STAFF
 Devon Ginn
 Director of Inclusion & Community Partnerships
 cara.hinh
 Associate Artistic Director
 Anna E. Barnett
 Education Manager
 Claire Wilcher
 Education Assistant

Original Artwork
 by Jingo M. de la Rosa

DESIGN
 Noelani Langille
 Multimedia & Design Manager

A motley crew of wonderfully unique and impassioned young spellers each yearn to be the next county champion. With clever songs, quirky characters, and uproarious humor, this captivating musical comedy is a silly celebration of the thrill of victory, the irony of defeat, and the gift of being true to yourself.

Recommended for students in grades 6-12

The performance will last approximately 2 hours, including one intermission.

INSIDE

Planning Your Visit..... 3
 The Writers..... 7
 History of Spelling Bees..... 8
 Putnam County..... 9
 Themes..... 10
 People..... 12
 Places..... 13
 Spelling Words..... 14
 Foreign Languages 16
 Indiana Academic Standards..... 17
 Discussion Questions..... 18
 Activities..... 19
 Writing Prompts..... 20
 Resources..... 21
 Text Glossary..... 22

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

GOING TO THE THEATRE



You, the audience, are one of the most important parts of any performance. Experiencing the theatre is a group activity shared not only with the actors, but also with the people sitting around you. Your attention and participation help the actors perform better, and allow the rest of the audience to enjoy the show. Here are a few simple tips to help make each theatre experience enjoyable for everyone:

Please leave mobile phones, cameras, and other electronic devices at home or switch them off in your bag. While texting might seem private, the light and motion can be distracting for those nearby and on stage. Please wait to text until after the show.

For student matinees, you are welcome to enjoy food and drinks in the lobby areas. There will be concessions sold for \$1 apiece in the lobby at intermission.

When you notice the house lights dimming and going out, it is a gentle signal to settle into your seats before the start of the play.

While the play unfolds, please refrain from chatting with your neighbors. Listen closely to the dialogue and sound effects, and look at the scenery, lights, and costumes. Your focus on the play helps ensure an uninterrupted experience for both the audience and the actors.

For the safety of everyone in the room, please remain in your seat and keep all hands, feet, and other items to yourself and away from the actors onstage or in the aisles.

To minimize disruptions, please remind yourself to use the restroom before the show or at intermission. You don't want to miss any exciting moments!

We encourage you to express your emotions during the play: laugh, cry, sigh, gasp! The more emotionally involved you are, the more you will enjoy the play.

Lastly, please remain at your seat and join in the applause during curtain call. This is a moment to show your appreciation for the performance, and it allows the actors a chance to express their gratitude for your attention.

Thank you for being part of our Theatre community, and enjoy the show!

PLANNING YOUR VISIT

STUDENT MATINEE ARRIVAL & PARKING INFORMATION

ARRIVAL & DISMISSAL

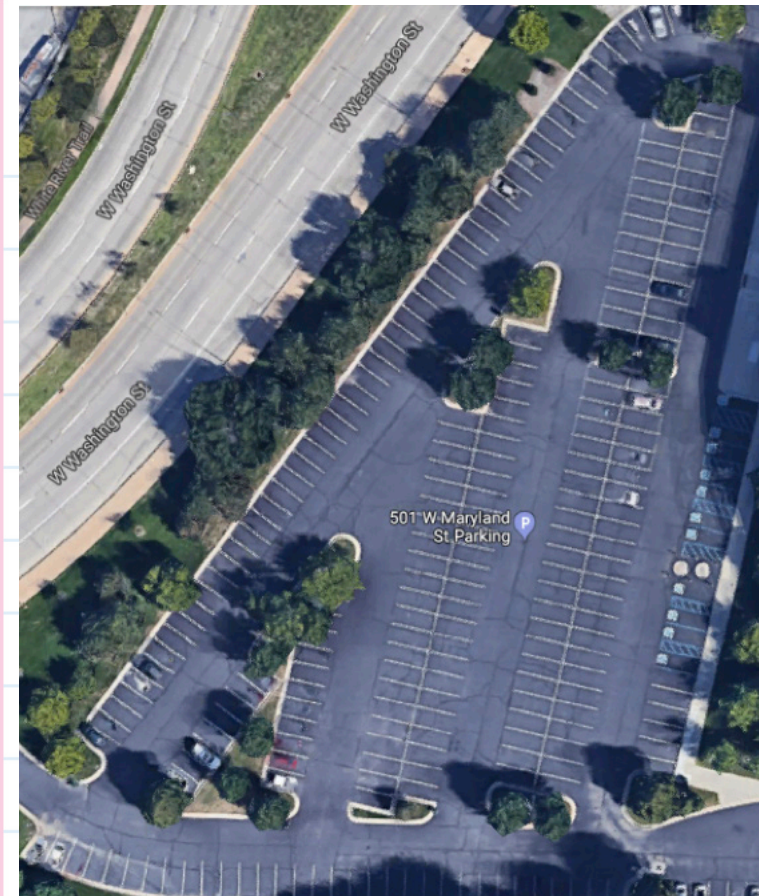
- IRT is located one-half block west of Circle Centre Mall on Washington Street, between northbound Illinois Street and southbound Capitol Avenue
- The physical address of IRT is 140 West Washington Street, Indianapolis, IN 46204.
- Groups should unload and load directly in front of the Theatre. (Do not block the entrance to Embassy Suites garage.) Please plan to arrive 20-30 minutes before your performance is scheduled to begin.
- You will be greeted at the curb by an IRT Staff Member and directed to the correct entrance.
- For shows on the Janet Allen Stage, students and teachers will take the stairs to the 4th floor.
- The teacher named on the reservation should check in with the IRT Education staff member stationed in the lobby.
- Your group will be ushered to your assigned seats.
- Students and chaperones should follow instructions of all IRT Staff for your safety.

LATE ARRIVAL

- If you believe that you are going to be late, please contact the IRT House Management at 317.635.5277. Provide a phone number and the name of the school so that Education staff may be in contact with you.
- You can contact IRT Education (education@irtlive.com) with non-emergency information on the day of the show.

PARKING

- Buses may park for free at Victory Field unless they are having an event - we will inform you if that is the case. The House Manager will give you a parking pass for each bus when you arrive. It should be displayed in the windshield.
- Continue east on Washington Street past the JW Marriott and turn left across Maryland Street into the Victory Field lot.
- **PLEASE NOTE that Victory Field no longer has public restroom spaces available. We apologize for any inconvenience.**
- See the map on the next page for full details.
- Additional parking options are located on the next page.
- **While IRT will make every effort to communicate parking information in advance, it is the responsibility of schools and drivers to make alternate arrangements.**



VICTORY FIELD PARKING MAP

Victory Field parking lot is located on the West side of the stadium. From IRT, continue west on Washington Street past the JW Marriott. Turn left on Schumacher Way, and cross Maryland Street into the Victory Field lot.

Some buses may need to double park in the lot. The image is of the Victory Field parking lot.

PLEASE NOTE that Victory Field no longer has public restrooms available to drivers. This is a change from years past. We apologize for any inconvenience.

Thank you,
Indianapolis Indians and
Indiana Repertory Theatre

ADDITIONAL PARKING OPTIONS

In the event that Victory Field is unavailable for free parking, here are some other potential options. **While IRT will make every effort to communicate parking info in advance, it is the responsibility of schools and drivers to make alternate arrangements.**

White River State Park: Paid surface parking is located on Washington Street, across from Victory Field. May require advance notice; event rates may apply. (Approximately .6 mi from IRT.)



Indianapolis Zoo: Paid parking is available on Washington Street, west of White River State Park. First come, first served. (Approximately 1.2 mi from IRT.)



Downtown Indy: Explore all available parking options at the Downtown Indy website. Buses are welcome to utilize street parking if all used spaces are paid.

CAR AND VAN PARKING OPTIONS

Ask a Theatre employee for a voucher that will reduce your parking fee to \$10. This voucher is available at Court Street Garage when attending an IRT show. This is only valid during the IRT's season.

Address for the Court Street Garage: 110 West Washington Street

PUBLIC TRANSPORTATION

IndyGo's Red Line, the city's rapid bus transit system, connects Broad Ripple and Fountain Square to the heart of downtown and other neighborhoods in Indianapolis. With buses running every 10-20 minutes and a stop directly next to the IRT on Capitol Avenue, the Red Line provides another convenient option for your transportation to the Theatre.

To plan your trip or for more information about the Red Line and other nearby routes, visit IndyGo.net or call IndyGo Customer Service at 317-635-3344.

THE STORY OF THE 25TH ANNUAL PUTNAM COUNTY SPELLING BEE



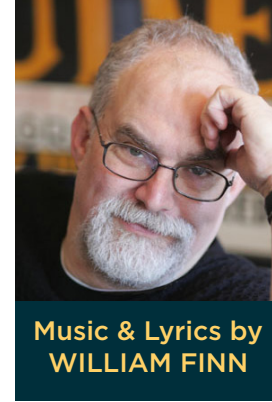
As Rona Lisa Peretti, long-time host of the Putnam County Spelling Bee, sets up for the event, she remembers the moment many years ago when she won the competition. She is interrupted by the entrance of this year's contestants, who sing "The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee." Rona introduces Vice Principal Douglas Panch, the competition's word speller, and Mitch Mahoney, who is acting as comfort counselor for the competition as part of his community service. Mr. Panch shares "The Spelling Rules," and Rona shares with us—not for the last time—"My Favorite Moment of the Bee."

As one by one the middle schoolers step forward to spell, we get to know them. Olive Ostrovsky tells us about her absent parents—her father is at work, and her mother is at an ashram in India—and she sings about "My Friend, the Dictionary." Leaf Coneybear, who was second runner-up in his local bee, confesses, "I'm Not That Smart." William Barfée demonstrates his "Magic Foot" spelling technique. Last year's second place finisher due to an unfortunate peanut allergy reaction, Barfee is determined to win the title from last year's champion, Chip Tolentino, a

popular, confident athlete and Boy Scout. Logainne Schwartz and Grubenierre, the youngest competitor, thanks her two dads, Daniel Schwartz and Carl Grubeinierre, who are very supportive—perhaps too supportive ("Woe Is Me"). Marcy Parks, a classic overachiever, brags, "I Speak Six Languages."

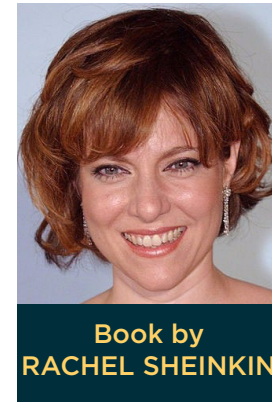
The contestants complain about how some words are very hard and some are very easy. The Bee, like life, is random and unfair: "Pandemonium." As they are eliminated, one by one, Mitch gives them each a juice box and the "Prayer of the Comfort Counselor," and the remaining contestants sing "Goodbye." Eventually, there are only two contestants left: one who will come in "Second," and one who will be the winner and champion of the 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee.

THE WRITERS



Music & Lyrics by
WILLIAM FINN

William Finn's first musical, *Sizzle*, was produced while he was a student at Williams College in 1971. It was the first original musical produced at Williams College since Stephen Sondheim attended the college 20 years earlier. A coming-of-age story about college students, *Sizzle* ended as the leading character died in an electric chair. Finn came to prominence with an Off-Broadway trilogy of one-act musicals: *In Trousers* (1979), *March of the Falsettos* (1981), and *Falsettoland* (1990) follow the character Marvin, who leaves his wife and son for another man but tries to keep his family together. In 1992, *March of the Falsettos* and *Falsettoland* were combined into *Falsettos*, which opened on Broadway in 1992 and won Tony Awards for Best Score and Best Book. *A New Brain* (1998) is based on Finn's near-death experience following brain surgery. *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* was produced on Broadway in 2005. Finn's other works include *Elegies: A Song Cycle* (2003), *Little Miss Sunshine* (2011), and *The Royal Family of Broadway* (2018—based on *The Royal Family* by Edna Ferber and George S. Kaufman).



Book by
RACHEL SHEINKIN

Rachel Sheinkin studied playwriting with Paula Vogel at Brown University and received an M.F.A. from Yale School of Drama. She won a MacDowell Fellowship and has taught at Yale and New York University's Tisch School of the Arts. In 2005 she won Tony and Drama Desk awards for Best Book of a Musical for *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Her other works include *Blood Drive* (2005), *Striking 12* (2006), *Sleeping Beauty Wakes* (2007), a stage musical adaptation of *Little House on the Prairie* (2008), and *The Royal Family of Broadway* (2018).



Conceived by
REBECCA FELDMAN

In 2000, Rebecca Feldman founded The Farm, a collective of writers and performers who use improvisation to create new works for the theatre. In 2004, with The Farm, Feldman conceived, directed, and performed in *C-R-E-P-U-S-C-U-L-E*, which later became the basis for *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. She has directed the TV movie *A/V Club* (2006) and several short films, including *My First Time Driving* (2007), *Uber Alice* (2008), and *Irving* (2017). She was a writer and associate producer for the musical finale episode of the Amazon series *Transparent* (2019).

SPELLING FACT:

Ironically, since spell-checking software first became widely available in the 1990s, the attendance at the National Spelling Bee has nearly doubled.

The spelling bee is thought to be an American invention. The first known use of the term spelling bee in print is from 1850. In the nineteenth century, the word bee was used to describe a gathering for a community project such as a quilting bee or a sewing bee.

One reason for the rise of the spelling bee was the desire to build a national culture for a new country that had only recently won political independence from Great Britain. In 1828, Noah Webster published his first dictionary of American English, designed to set nationwide standards for modernized American spellings distinct from British spellings—for example, *honor* rather than *honour*. Spelling bees were a way, through games and competitions, to encourage both children and adults to unify the new nation through language. (Interestingly, spelling bees have never really caught on in other countries around the world. It is thought that one reason for this absence may be that other languages tend to have more regular spelling based on phonetics. Spelling in English, which can be very difficult because of highly irregular spelling, offers much more of a challenge for competition.)

Of course, the promotion of one way of speaking came at the expense of others. “Without question, American English was standardized as a national language to the detriment of other American languages, especially Native American tongues,” writes anthropologist Shalini Shankar in *Beeline*, a study of the spelling bee phenomenon. “These languages rarely had a written record, making their preservation solely reliant on speakers passing them on to subsequent generations.”

Spelling bees surged in popularity after the 1871 publication of *The Hoosier Schoolmaster*, which prominently featured a spelling bee in its plot. This widely read novel by Edward Eggleston focused on the experiences of a schoolteacher in rural Indiana.

SPELLING FACT:

The most commonly used word in the history of the Scripps National Spelling Bee is *connoisseur*.

MARIE BOLDEN



In 1908, the National Education Association organized a spelling bee in Cleveland, Ohio, with 510 eighth graders from 34 states competing. The New Orleans team threatened to withdraw from the competition rather than compete with the integrated teams of the North, but ultimately they stayed. The students each took a written exam of 100 words before taking to the stage, where Marie Bolden, a 13-year-old African American girl from Cleveland, won the competition by correctly spelling 400 words—including *persevere*, *misspell*, *embarrass*, and *prejudice*. Booker T. Washington (1856-1915), who rose from slavery to become a highly respected educator and one of the primary leaders in the African American community, was in attendance. Speaking to the assembled crowd of 6,000, he said, “You will admit that we spell out of the same spelling book that you do. And I think you will also admit that we spell a little better.”

FRANK NEUHAUSER



In 1925, the Louisville Courier-Journal organized its first annual National Spelling Bee, co-sponsored by nine newspapers across the United States. Two million students participated, with nine advancing to the finals in Washington DC. The winner, 11-year-old Frank Neuhauser of Louisville, Kentucky, met President Calvin Coolidge and won \$500 in gold pieces and a bicycle.

BRUHAT SOMA



The Scripps Howard News Service began sponsoring this competition in 1941. Since 1994, the Scripps National Spelling Bee has been broadcast on ESPN or ABC, often during prime time. In what is now often described as a “brain sport,” high-level competitors hire coaches and train year-round. “Those who become elite spellers manage and structure their time meticulously,” Shankar writes in *Beeline*. “As children do with other sports, young spellers build stamina and focus to become experts, often while taking on numerous other activities.”

Media attention turns middle schoolers into “spellebrities.” The 2024 champion, 12-year-old Bruhat Soma of St. Petersburg, Florida, won in a tiebreaker by spelling 29 words correctly in 90 seconds. He took home a cash prize of \$50,000.



The text of *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* gives no particular state as its location. There are in fact nine Putnam Counties in the United States: in Florida, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, New York, Ohio, Tennessee, and West Virginia. Eight of these (all except Florida) were named for Israel Putnam (1718-1790), a farmer who fought in the French and Indian War, rising from private to colonel, and later served as a general in the Revolutionary War. He is a character in the video game *Assassin’s Creed III*.

What is now Putnam County, Indiana, is on ancestral lands of indigenous peoples including the Delaware, Eel River, Miami, and Potawatomi. When the Indiana Territory was admitted to the Union as a state in 1816, much of what is today Central and Northern Indiana was still Native land. In 1818, in the Treaty of St. Mary’s, territories south of the Wabash River (a large area stretching from Lafayette south to Bedford and east to Richmond), including what would become Putnam County, were ceded to the United States.

Putnam County was the fifth county created in the state, in 1821. It has an area of 483 square miles, centered about 50 miles west of Indianapolis. The terrain is mostly flat, with a few gently rolling hills in the southwest quadrant.

Before the arrival of white settlers in the late 1700s, the region was completely covered with beech, hickory, maple, oak, poplar, and walnut trees; eventually most of the land was cleared to be used for agriculture.

Greencastle was established as the county seat in 1821. The first local newspaper, the *Hoosier*, was published in 1830. The first annual county fair was held in 1837. That same year, Indiana Asbury University was founded in Greencastle under the patronage of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Indiana Asbury was one of the first institutions in the West to grant equal privileges to women. One of the first railroads in Indiana began passing through the county in 1852. That same year, the *Putnam Republican Banner* was started; it is now known as the *Banner Graphic*. Eli Lilly (1838-1898) opened his first drugstore on the Putnam County Courthouse Square in 1859. In 1884, Indiana Asbury became DePauw University.

Today, Putnam County has a population of 37,000. Besides Greencastle, its towns include Bainbridge, Cloverdale, Filmore, Roachdale, and Russellville. The county has 9 of the state’s 98 covered bridges (second only to nearby Parke County, with 32) and 25 sites on the National Register of Historic Places.

The Putnam County Playhouse was founded in Greencastle in 1962. Since 1983, this community theatre has performed in a converted barn with 200 seats. Although the Putnam County Playhouse has never produced *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*, the show was produced by Greencastle High School in 2017.

THEMES IN THE PLAY

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Neglectful and Absent Parents

In *Spelling Bee*, the character Olive Ostrovsky is dealing with parents who are largely absent from her life. Her father is at work all the time, and her mother is far away in India. Because of this, Olive more or less has to take care of herself. Neglect is a form of child abuse that can have serious consequences that last through adulthood. Children who have been neglected, whether physically or emotionally, can face a lifetime of negative side effects, such as depression, PTSD, and difficulty trusting others. If you suspect that a child is being neglected, call the National Child Abuse Hotline at 800.422.4453 for help accessing local resources.

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Puberty

During puberty, a child's body grows and changes faster than at any other point in their life except infancy. Puberty typically starts between the ages of 8 and 15. In boys, a huge surge in the hormone testosterone causes many changes in their bodies. These changes are not only physical, but mental and emotional as well. One of the spellers in the bee, Chip Tolentino, discovers new-found feelings that ultimately distract him from the competition. For more information on what to expect during puberty and how to help young people during this time, scan the QR code.



SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Youth Activism

In 1969, the Supreme Court ruled that students have a right to protest within their schools, protecting students' First Amendment rights to free speech. Since then, the amount of student protests and demonstrations has grown. Students across the country like Logainne Schwartandgrubenierre are becoming more politically and socially aware and more eager to stand up for what they believe in. Gun violence in schools, the lack of inclusivity in core class subjects, the treatment of minorities in schools, anti-war sentiments, and more have led to student activism. For more information on students' rights, visit the ACLU's website.

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Self-Esteem

Leaf Coneybear is a speller who marches to the beat of his own drum, despite the ways that his family may try to dim his light. Leaf expresses himself through fashion; Rona Lisa Peretti points out that he makes his own clothes. Over the course of the bee, audiences watch as Leaf learns to love all of his abilities, a crucial step that young people face in the journey of building their self-esteem. For more about fostering a healthy journey of building self-esteem, scan the QR code.



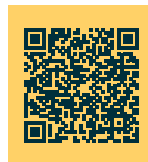
SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Burnout

Burnout is a state of mental, physical, or emotional exhaustion. Burnout in children happens when kids are faced with ongoing stress or frustration, with no chance to relax and recharge. Marcy Park is one of many gifted students who experience burnout as a result of juggling too many roles, having little control, and committing to perfectionism. The Davidson Institute offers signs to look for concerning burnout in gifted students, as well as ways to overcome burnout.

SCAN FOR MORE INFORMATION



Bullying

As a young person, William Barfee was frequently bullied by his peers. As a result, he became defensive and unkind towards others, making him a bit of a bully himself. Bullying has been proven to have long-term effects on students that can carry into adulthood. As schools have tried different approaches to prevent bullying, the importance of being an active bystander—someone who speaks up when they see bullying—has been recognized as an effective form of bullying prevention. For more information on helping your young person deal with bullying, check out this report published by Harvard Medical School in the QR code.

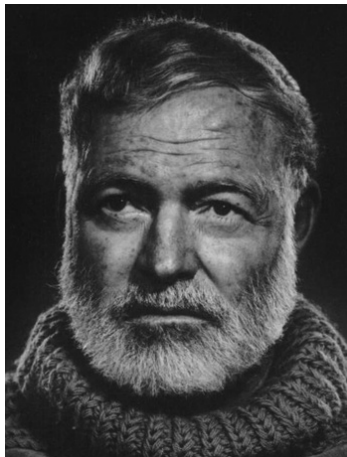
PEOPLE

Famous people mentioned in the play:



JOHN DOS PASSOS (1896–1970) was an American novelist, best known for his *U.S.A.* trilogy (1930–1936). Written in an experimental, non-linear form, this series of three novels blends fiction, biography, and news clippings with stream-

of-consciousness narrative to paint a landscape of early 20th century American culture.



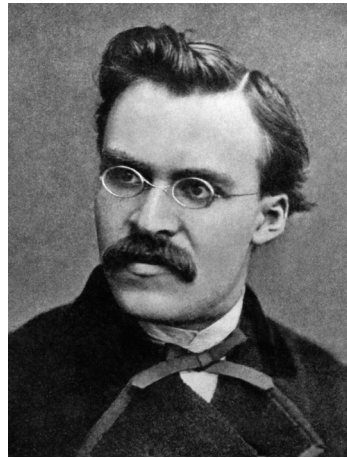
ERNEST HEMINGWAY (1899–1961) was an American novelist known for his economical, understated writing style as well as his adventurous lifestyle and blunt, outspoken public image. His most famous books include *The Sun Also Rises* (1926), *A Farewell to Arms* (1929), *For*

Whom the Bell Tolls (1940), and *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952).



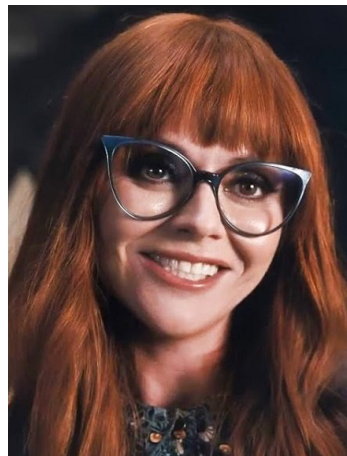
WOLFGANG AMADEUS MOZART (1756–1791) was a prolific and influential composer of the Classical period. Despite his short life, he wrote more than 800 works representing virtually every Western classical genre of his time, including symphonies and operas as well as choral and chamber works. He is

widely regarded as one of the greatest composers in the history of Western music.



FRIEDRICH NIETZSCHE (1844–1900) was a German philosopher. Prominent elements of his philosophy include the notion of Apollonian and Dionysian forces (logic and order vs. passion and chaos); his belief that God is dead, and that objective truth does not exist, leading to the profound crisis of nihilism (the belief

that life is meaningless); a belief that the driving force in humans is the will to power, the desire for self-determination; and the concept of the Übermensch, the creative power of the individual to overcome cultural and moral traditions in pursuit of new values and aesthetic health.



CHRISTINA RICCI (born 1980) is an American actress. Since her breakout role as Wednesday in the 1991 film *The Addams Family*, she has been known for playing unusual characters with a dark edge. Recently she has appeared as Mrs. Thornhill in the Netflix series *Wednesday*.

PLACES

Places mentioned in the play:



BOMBAY was the British name for Mumbai, the largest city in India. The city officially restored its name to Mumbai in 1995. Bombay is an anglicized version of Bombaim, an old Portuguese name for the city. Mumbai is a local name that dates back to the 16th century, derived from the goddess Mumbadevi, the city's patron deity.

CORNISH was the language that was spoken in Cornwall, the southwestern-most county of Great Britain, prior to the 19th century. Today it is mostly used as a second language among those who wish to preserve Cornish traditions and heritage. Cornish is not closely related to the Dutch language, as Schwartzky mistakenly believes. It is related to Breton, the language of Brittany, a peninsula in northwest France, just across the English Channel from Cornwall.



THE GANGES is a river that flows through India and Bangladesh, one of the largest rivers in the world. It is a sacred river to Hindus, who often make a pilgrimage to the river to bathe in its waters.

LATVIA is a small country in the Baltic region of Northern Europe, bordered by Estonia to the north, Russia to the east, Belarus to the southeast, Lithuania to the south, and the Baltic Sea to the west.

THE REPUBLIC OF GUINEA-BISSAU is a small country located on the Atlantic coast of West Africa.

SPELLING WORDS

Most of the spelling words in The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee are defined in the play's dialogue. Here is a list of those words where that is not the case, along with a few other unusual words used in the play with which your students may not be familiar.

anathema | Something or someone that one vehemently dislikes.

antediluvian | Literally, of or belonging to the time before the biblical flood; often used more casually to mean that something is ridiculously old-fashioned.

antihistamine | A drug that is commonly used to alleviate the symptoms of hay fever and other allergies.



astrobleme | The deformed bedrock or sediment that is the remnant of a crater made by the impact of a meteorite or comet.

camouflage | An animal's natural coloring that enables it to blend in with its surroundings; also, clothing worn for the same purpose.



Chinchilla | A grey rodent native to the Andes, known for its soft, dense fur; popular both in the fur industry and as pets.

chloroform | A liquid organic compound that when inhaled or ingested serves as a powerful anesthetic, euphoriant, anti-anxiety medication, and/or sedative.

chromatophore | A cell that produces color in amphibians, fish, and reptiles. (*Chromatophore* in the script is misspelled.)

clepe | To call out or cry out; archaic.

coryza | Inflammation of the mucous membrane in the nose, caused especially by a cold or by hay fever.

cystitis | An infection of the bladder; the most common type of urinary tract infection (UTI), particularly in women.

echolalia | A neurological condition in which a person automatically repeats words spoken by another.

elanguescence | The process of slowly fading into obscurity or nonexistence.

fabaceae | In taxonomy (the scientific classification system—kingdom, phylum, class, order, family, genus, species), fabaceae is the family of legumes, peas, and beans.

fecund | Producing or capable of producing offspring, vegetation, fruit, etc., in abundance; prolific, fruitful, fertile; also, very productive or creative intellectually.

halitosis | Bad breath.

hallux | A person's big toe.



ilspile | Another name for a hedgehog.

indicant | A thing that indicates something; an indicator.

odious | Deserving or causing hatred; detestable.

omphaloskepsis | Contemplation of one's navel as an aid to meditation; navel-gazing.

opine | To express an opinion.

palaver | An unnecessarily elaborate or complex procedure.



peregrine | A falcon that, when diving for prey, flies as fast as 200 miles per hour, making it the fastest-moving animal on earth.

plaintive | Sounding sorrowful, mournful, or melancholic.

podiatry | The branch of medicine devoted to the study, diagnosis, and treatment of disorders of the foot, ankle, and lower limb.



rooibos | A broomlike South African plant used to make an herbal tea.

schematic | Noun: a simplified diagram of an electronic circuit. Adjective: a simplistic explanation of a complex subject.

segue | An uninterrupted transition from one piece of music or film scene to another.

siphon | A tube used to convey liquid upwards from a reservoir and then down to a lower level of its own accord. Once the liquid has been forced into the tube, typically by suction or immersion, flow continues unaided.

staphylococcus | The bacteria that causes staph infections, which are typically characterized by redness, pus, swelling, and tenderness.

tilapia | A freshwater fish, the fourth most popular fish eaten in the United States.



Tupi | An indigenous people of Brazil.

vug | A cavity inside a rock, sometimes lined with crystals.

vulpine | Relating to a fox or foxes.

weevil | A beetle that is known for damaging and killing wheat and grain crops.

zoonosis | An infectious disease that has jumped from animals to humans, such as rabies or trichinosis.

FOREIGN LANGUAGES

In her song "I Speak Six Languages," Marcy uses the following foreign phrases:

Je peux parler six langues | French: *I can speak six languages.*

Cado idio maes simple | Spanish: *Every language is simpler.*

Jerro'oh yo no reshipe no yesashesades | Japanese: *It's as simple as a Jello recipe.*

Ya gavaru shetz yatzukim | Russian: *I speak six languages.*

V'ani yodat shalom | Hebrew: *And I can say hello ...*

Im noch mindestens sieben mehr | German: *... in at least seven more.*

Here are some other non-English terms used in the play:

accent ague | French: acute accent. In French, it is only used with the letter é, as in café or fiancée or Barfée.

bat mitzvah | Hebrew: a coming-of-age rite in Judaism for 13-year-old girls (the corresponding rite for boys is a bar mitzvah). Both rites involve a great deal of study in preparation. Following the ritual, young people are held responsible for knowing Jewish ritual law, tradition, and ethics, and are able to participate in all areas of Jewish community life to the same extent as adults.

C'est pour toi que je suis ici | French: It's for you that I am here.



om | A sacred sound in Hinduism, Buddhism, Jainism, and Sikhism. It serves as a sonic representation of the divine, and its written representation is the most important symbol of Hinduism. It is often chanted as an invocation before a spiritual recitation or as a mantra during meditation.

Semper Fi | Semper fidelis is Latin for "always faithful." This phrase is the motto of the U.S. Marine Corps.

shanti | A Hindu word meaning inner peace. In both Hindu and Buddhist practices, shanti is often chanted three times to represent threefold peace in body, mind, and spirit.



INDIANA ACADEMIC STANDARDS ALIGNMENT GUIDE

Seeing *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee* at the Indiana Repertory Theatre is a great way to help make connections for students and facilitate their understanding of a text. Some key state standards to consider on your trip may be found here:



DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

Before Seeing the Play

1. Have you ever participated in a spelling bee? How did you feel during that experience? Excited? Nervous? Frustrated? Did anyone from your family attend? How did their presence or absence affect you?
2. What makes a musical different from other plays?
3. What school subjects come easily to you? What are some you have to work hard to understand? Why do you suppose you have these different responses to different subjects?
4. What tips or tricks do you use to make sure that you spell a word correctly?

After Seeing the Play

1. Do you think this play would have been as effective if it did not have music? Why or why not?
2. Who do you think should have won the spelling bee? Defend your answer.
3. Was the audience participation effective? What did you like or dislike about it?
4. How did the costumes further character development? What could you tell about characters just by how they looked?
5. How did lights and sounds help you understand the flashbacks, inner thoughts, and asides?
6. The actors playing the contestants are not middle school students. How would the show have been different if the actors were the ages of their characters? What are some benefits of having adults play children? What are some disadvantages?
7. Why do you think the authors chose a spelling bee as the setting for a play?
8. To which character did you most closely relate? Why?
9. How did you feel as each character was eliminated from the bee? How did this experience relate to your own experiences of losing competitions, including games, sports, and/or performance contests?
10. How accurately did you feel the play represented various types of middle school students? How did the characters relate to people you know—student or adult?
11. There are moments in the play where the actors briefly play family members for other characters. How did the actors create these new characters? What about this idea worked or didn't work for you?

ACTIVITIES

1. Research the National Spelling Bee. Create a poster with interesting facts about the Bee.
2. Divide the class in half. Each group uses a dictionary to find 50 words they want the other group to spell. Have a spelling bee in which sides take turns asking and spelling words.
3. Create a quiz with the spelling words from the play.
4. Create a collage of images that reflect what is going on in your head during a school day. Include not only the subjects you are studying but also aspects of your home, social, and/or spiritual life.
5. Think of another musical that you have seen or been in. Compare and contrast the styles of that show and *The 25th Annual Putnam County Spelling Bee*. Think of the structures of the plays, types of songs, themes, staging, characters, etc.
6. Create a musical theatre playlist with a theme. Here are some examples:
 - Songs from Tony-winning musicals
 - Timeline of famous musicals produced through the decades
 - Timeline of musicals that tell stories from history
 - Songs you can dance to
 - Songs from musicals that were also popular as radio hits
 - Comic songs
7. An anagram is the rearrangement of the letters of a word, phrase, or short sentence, so as to form a new word or sentence. Example: "midshipman" and "mind his map" are anagrams. Olive and Barfee find anagrams together in the play. Read the following story and decode each of the underlined anagrams so the story makes sense:

Thinking of you, dear neat chair, would soon come to the red nuts and gin of what I write you in a rag man of my visits with a crymangle on the I hire parsons. As we were walking along, talking about the good deeds of Flit on cheering angel, we suddenly met a crowd around the moon starer. Asking him if it was a rare mad frolic, he said, "'Tis no demon's art," and that he was holding his the bar watching the moon shining up with oil soap and trying to enlighten the ten tea pots of different countries." We did not take much stock in their real fun or to love ruin. Two sly ware came up to us and said, "We don't see much the law in this." We had never sympathized with the doctrines of Sin sat on a tin tar tub. Our first call was on a popular house rats, who had just returned from an horse cart concert. We had a pleasant call, and as we came out we saw a go nurse and Dr. Rich able man driving at full speed. In great no stern action we followed them, and found a just master hurt by the cars. When the excitement was over, we were Tim in a pet to return home, so that ended our visits to the I hire parsons.

WRITING PROMPTS

1. Write brief bios for each of the characters in the play. Include what you know from the play itself, plus imagine how their past might have led them to this point. Then imagine what might happen to them in the future, based on the unique personal qualities they showed in the play.
2. Write an imaginative paragraph using simple, one- or two-syllable words. Then, using a dictionary or thesaurus, replace as many words as possible with polysyllabic or unusual words. Looking at both paragraphs, rewrite a third time using some simple and some complex words so that the sentences are as interesting and informative as possible.
3. This play uses a great deal of ad-lib or improvisation based on the location of the production, the characteristics of audience participants, and current events. Write a description of your town, your school, and its auditorium, and a bio of yourself that could be used in a future production of this play.
4. Write a song about yourself as a middle school student. What were/are your worries, pressures, or successes?
5. Write a review of the play. A well-rounded review includes your opinion of the theatrical aspects—scenery, lights, costumes, sound, direction, acting—as well as your impressions of the script and the impact of the story and/or themes and the overall production. What moments made an impression? How do the elements of scenery, costumes, lighting, and sound work with the actors' performances of the text to tell the story? What ideas or themes did the play make you think about? How did it make you feel? Did you notice the reactions of the audience as a whole? Would you recommend this play to others? Why or why not? To share your reviews with others, send to: education@irtlive.com.



RESOURCES

Websites & Podcasts

Scripps National Spelling Bee



A Way with Words



The History of Musical Theatre



Musical Theatre in America—Putting it Together: Words and Music



Putnam County Visitors Guide



Articles

The History of the Spelling Bee
by Rebecca Sealton



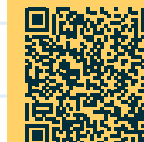
I've Never Enjoyed Audience Participation Until Self-Isolation Changed My Mind
by Lauren Wimmer



Age 28 going on 12: How Adult Actors Pull off Playing Children Onstage
by Stuart Miller



Theater's Latest Prompt: Don't Act Your Age
by Eric Grode



Books & Poems

The Hoosier Schoolmaster: A Story of Backwoods Life in Indiana
by Edward Eggleston

"The Spellin' Bee" by Paul Laurence Dunbar

"Spelling Bee" by Shel Silverstein

It's Not Bragging If It's True: How to Be Awesome at Life, from a Winner of the Scripps National Spelling Bee
by Zalia Avant-garde

American Bee: The National Spelling Bee and the Culture of Word Nerds
by James Maguire

Bee Season by Myla Goldberg

Beeline by Shalini Shankar

How Do You Spell G-E-E-K? by Julie Anne Peters

Broadway Musicals: Show by Show, Ninth Edition
by Stanley Green, revised and updated by Cary Ginell

Musical Theatre: A History by John Kenrick

Movies

Akeelah and the Bee (2006, PG) | *Bee Season* (2005, PG-13)

Spellbound (2002, G) | *Spelling the Dream* (2020, G)



GLOSSARY

ashram | An ashram is a spiritual hermitage or a monastery in Indian religions. An ashram would traditionally be located far from human habitation, in forests or mountainous regions, amidst refreshing natural surroundings conducive to spiritual instruction and meditation. The residents of an ashram regularly perform spiritual and physical exercises, such as yoga, as well as making sacrifices and penances.

bathing beauty | The term “bathing beauty” dates back to the early twentieth century. From 1915 to 1928, film producer Mack Sennett (1880-1960) created a series of comic film shorts featuring the Sennett Bathing Beauties, featuring attractive young women cavorting on the beach in bathing suits. In the context of the play, Olive’s Mom may be referring back to the memory of bathing Olive as a baby, as well as the image of a ritual bathing in the Ganges.

lactose intolerant | A condition in which one’s system cannot properly digest dairy products.

mucus membrane | The moist inner lining of organs and body cavities such as the nose, mouth, lungs, and stomach. Glands in the mucous membrane make mucus, a thick, slippery fluid intended to stop pathogens and dirt from entering the body and to prevent bodily tissues from becoming dehydrated.

restraining order | A restraining order is used by a court to protect a person in a situation often involving harassment or stalking. The alleged abuser may be required to stay a certain distance away from a person and their home, workplace, or school, and not to contact them by telephone, notes, mail, fax, email, text, social media, or delivery of flowers or other gifts.

Rocky (1976) was written by Sylvester Stallone and starred him as small-time boxer who unexpectedly gets a chance to fight the world heavyweight champion, Apollo Creed. It won the Academy Award for Best Picture and inspired a series of five sequels. (The recent series of *Creed* films are spin-offs from the original *Rocky* films.) *Rocky*’s theme song is “Gonna Fly Now,” composed by Bill Conti with lyrics by Carol Connors and Ayn Robbins, originally performed by DeEtta West and Nelson Pigford. It hit number one on the *Billboard* Hot 100 chart, ending up as the No. 21 song of 1977. It is one of the most popular classic tunes of the 1970s.

screwball | A screwball is a baseball pitch designed to move in the opposite direction of just about every other breaking pitch. It is one of the rarest pitches thrown in baseball, mostly because it is (perhaps erroneously) believed to put an unhealthy strain on a pitcher’s arm.



Sea anemones are often thought to be plants because they share a name with the anemone flower that grows on land, their tentacles look like petals, they are usually attached to rocks, they tend to stay in the same spot for weeks or months at a time, and when they do move, it is so slowly that it is imperceptible to the naked eye. But actually they are carnivorous invertebrate sea creatures that feed on plankton and small fish.