



SPELL IT AND MEAN IT!

Adapted from 'Spell It and Mean It' by Cara D'Amico

TEXT TYPE: Non-fiction: Persuasive—Magazine Article
GUIDED READING LEVEL: O

SUMMARY: Should spelling bee contestants have to define the words they spell? This article explores this question by presenting the opinions of two students with opposite views.

FOCUS COMPREHENSION STRATEGY

- evaluating

FURTHER COMPREHENSION STRATEGIES

- inferring
- making connections: text to self

ORAL LANGUAGE OPPORTUNITIES

- Value Line strategy
- discussing with a group
- mock interview with a spelling bee contestant (option 3 in Focused Rereading)

WORKING WITH WORDS

- word solving and building: frequently uses meaning connections to solve a range of unfamiliar words and construct meanings (e.g., knowing 'contest' can help you solve and understand the meaning of 'contestant')
- high-frequency words: recognizes important words linked to other curriculum areas (e.g., math)

ASSESSMENT OPPORTUNITIES

Observe each student's ability to:

- evaluate information to create an informed opinion
- back up their opinions with evidence from the text
- make inferences from the text and own ideas/opinions
- connect ideas from the text to personal experiences
- use the meaning of known words to work out the meanings of unfamiliar words
- use root words to solve multi-syllabic words

ASSESSMENT TOOLS

Select from the following:

- Evaluating Strategy Checklist
- Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record

TEXT FEATURES

- text box

VISUAL LITERACY

- inset photographs with captions

TEXT SUPPORTS

- headings
- subheadings
- pronunciation key
- selected word definitions from 2006 National Spelling Bee
- mathematical ordinals and terminology, e.g., '12th,' '30 000'

POSSIBLE TEXT CHALLENGES

- some difficult vocabulary, e.g., 'recite,' 'California native,' 'coryza,' 'momentum,' 'competition,' 'affiliated,' 'immerse,' 'regional'

BEFORE READING

Making Connections: Text to Self

Activate and build prior knowledge

- Ask if anyone has ever participated in a spelling bee and/or watched a movie about a spelling bee. Have a discussion about what students know about spelling bees.

ESL NOTE: Ask students if there were spelling bees in their native country, and ask them what they remember about them.

Inferring

- Ask, *Would you like to participate in a spelling bee? What makes you think so?*
- Ask, *How do you think students feel during a spelling bee? What makes you think this? Do you think having to define the words would make a difference to how contestants feel? What makes you think this?* Encourage students to use evidence from the text and their own ideas to support their opinions.

Text Features

Introduce supports and challenges

- Invite students to look at the article. Ask, *Do you think this is a fiction or non-fiction text? Why do you think so?* Encourage students to use evidence from the text and their own ideas to support their answers.
- Ask students to turn to the text box at the end of the article and ask them to pronounce the first word—‘coryphaeus.’ Then explain to students how the phonetic pronunciation beside each word works. Ask students if they have ever noticed this feature in the dictionary. Have students try reading the second word using the phonetic pronunciation.

Word Solving and Building

- Write the word ‘regional’ on the board and have students read the word. Ask, *What smaller word can you find inside ‘regional’?* Help students find the word region and briefly discuss what it means. Explain that knowing a smaller word or root word can help them figure out larger words. Tell students that they should look for root words in the larger words they will be reading in the article.

High-Frequency Words

- Point out the ordinal ‘12th’ in the third paragraph. Ask, *How would you go about reading this word?* With students’ help, read the words and determine its meaning. Continue having students read aloud other numbers in the text, clarifying meaning when necessary.

Evaluating

Set a purpose for reading

- Explain to students that two different opinions will be presented in this article. Say, *As you are reading the article, I would like you to think about whether or not spelling bee contestants should be able to define the words they are spelling. You will need to provide evidence from the text to support your own ideas.*

Provide for early finishers

- Encourage students who finish early to look for multi-syllabic words in the article and locate any known words or root words within them.

DURING READING

Monitor reading

- Have a student read a portion of the text aloud to you. Assist with word solving, comprehension, and vocabulary. Provide appropriate comprehension prompts, e.g., *Do you agree with Mariana’s position? What makes you think that? Are there any points that Dalton raises that you agree with? What reasons do you have for that opinion?*
- Give feedback to students on successes and any areas that may need attention.

Observe

- Make observations on your assessment tools. (See the Evaluating Strategy Checklist and the Comprehension Strategies Anecdotal Record in the *Grade 4 Literacy Support Guide*.)
- You may have a second student read or spend time observing other group members and provide them with comprehension prompts. Be sure to ask students to provide evidence for their answers.
- Note any successful reading strategies you observe, e.g., using a meaning connection to solve an unknown word, or stating an opinion about spelling bees.

AFTER READING

ESL NOTE: Do the following activity with small groups while the rest of the class observes. This should help clarify the issues for the students who are waiting their turn. The next day, do the activity with the whole class. Ask students if they’ve changed their opinion and have a few of them explain why.

Evaluating

Revisit the purpose for reading

- The following question can be used during a Value Line activity. (See Oral Language Strategies in the *Grade 4 Literacy Support Guide*.) Ask, *Should spelling bee contestants have to define the words they spell?* Create a line on the floor using tape or string and place the labels ‘strongly support,’ ‘support,’ ‘not sure,’ ‘disagree,’ and ‘strongly disagree’ along it. Direct students to move to the appropriate place on the line. Students then share their ideas with other students standing with them. Once groups have had a chance to hear everyone’s views, have students share with the other groups. Encourage students to use evidence from the text and their own ideas to support their opinions.

TEACHING TIP:

Have students share any words for which they used the root word to figure out an unknown word. If students do not volunteer any words, record the following words on the board: ‘pressure,’ ‘competition,’ and ‘definitions’ and have students figure out what they mean using the root word. Ask, *How did knowing the root word help you understand the meanings?*

Check on outstanding challenges

- Your observations will help you work out other challenges students experienced. Discuss and clarify at this point, e.g., a difficult word or a comprehension issue. Have students had difficulty with multi-syllabic words? Were the provided definitions in the text box helpful? Are students frequently using root words to help solve unknown words?

Note successful strategy use

- Explain a successful strategy you observed, e.g., *I really liked how Emma found the root word ‘contest’ in ‘contestant.’ She knew that a contest is a competition and figured out that the word contestant must mean someone who takes part in a contest. Looking at the root word can help us figure out what the word means.*

FOCUSED REREADING

The following options are provided for focused rereading in the next Guided Reading lesson. Choose an activity that meets the needs of your students, or you might prefer to choose a Reader Response activity from the *Grade 4 Literacy Support Guide*.

Written

- Ask students to write a letter to either Dalton or Mariana explaining why they disagree with his or her position. Make sure students properly explain and support their opinion and point of view.
- Have students create their own list of words that can be used in a spelling bee. You may choose to have them use words from the article or from the Word Wall. You could then use these words when holding a class spelling bee.

Artistic

- Have students create a poster that either supports or opposes changing the spelling bee to include definitions. Explain to students that they will need to come up with a feature that will catch a reader’s attention and explain their position quickly. Brainstorm possible ‘catchy’ slogans with students. Divide the class into two groups—either for or against—and have the groups make posters using symbols, words, and illustrations.

Oral/dramatic

- Have students create a mock interview with a spelling bee contestant. Each student is to create a list of questions they would ask a spelling bee contestant. Students can take turns interviewing one another.

Evaluating**Word Solving and Building****Evaluating****Synthesizing/Inferring**