

Language Arts

Genre

Nonfiction Articles provide information about real people, places, or events.

Text Feature

Photographs and Captions give visual examples that help explain what the text states.

Content Vocabulary

competition

orally

eliminates



The National

SPELLING BEE

by Nicole Lee

Does the word *autochthonous* sound familiar? Luckily, to David Tidmarsh, it did. David correctly spelled *autochthonous* to win the 77th National Spelling Bee. David, from South Bend, Indiana, won the spelling championship at age 14. In the final round of **competition**, David beat Akshay Buddiga, a 13-year-old boy from Colorado.

Welcome to the exciting and intense world of spelling bees. The National Spelling Bee takes place each June in Washington, D.C. The competition has been around for a long time. It began in 1925 with only nine contestants. In 2004 there were 265 contestants ranging in age from 8 to 15. Contestants for the National Spelling Bee come from English-speaking countries all over the world. Students from Jamaica, Puerto Rico, and even Saudi Arabia have competed in the National Spelling Bee.

It takes a lot of hard work and dedication to advance to the National Spelling Bee finals. Students spend a lot of time preparing for competition. The words chosen for the competition are chosen from the dictionary by a panel of word experts. There are more than 470,000 words in the dictionary, and any one of these words could be chosen for the competition. David spent several months preparing for the finals. He spent many hours studying a dictionary, and a list of 10,000 words that he created. Fortunately for David, *autochthonous* was one of the words on his list. After David won he said, "I was just hoping I got a word I studied."



Spelling contestants spend months poring over the dictionary.









Intense moments on David's road to V-I-C-T-O-R-Y!

arete

The purpose of the National Spelling Bee is to encourage students to improve their spelling, broaden their vocabularies, and develop correct English usage. During round one of the championships, the spellers have to take a 25-word written test. In round two, each student spells a word **orally**. Next, the judges score the students. The top 90 students move on to round three. Any mistake during round three or the later rounds **eliminates** the speller. Some of the words that David had to spell before the 15th and final round were *gaminerie*, *arete*, *balancelle*, and *sumpsimus*.



Akshay (left) and David anxiously await their turns.



Spellers qualify for the finals by winning locally sponsored spelling bees in their home communities. Qualifying for the national competition is a significant accomplishment. Every student who advances to the national competition is awarded a prize. The champion gets \$17,000, a set of encyclopedias, an engraved trophy, and several other prizes. When asked what he would do with the prize money, David said, “I might put it in a savings account,” and “I’ll probably take a little and spend it at the mall.”



autochthonous



gaminerie

Connect and Compare



1. Look at the photo of the spellers sitting on the stage. What feelings do you think the contestants experienced during the competition? **Photographs and Captions**
2. What advice do you think David would give to someone who wanted to enter a spelling bee? **Evaluate**
3. Think about this article and *Miss Alaineus*. Compare how Sage prepared for the vocabulary bee and David prepared for the spelling bee. **Reading and Writing Across Texts**



Language Arts Activity

Does your state have spelling bees? Research spelling bees in your state and write a paragraph about what you need to do to enter a local spelling bee.

Find out more about the National Spelling Bee at
www.macmillanmh.com

WRITE ABOUT A SCHOOL CONTEST

Writer's Craft

A Good Paragraph

A **good paragraph** has a topic sentence that lets a reader know what the subject of the paragraph will be. Supporting details add information about the subject.

My topic sentence is a clue that practicing spelling words is the main idea of the paragraph.

I use supporting details to add information about my topic sentence.

Always One Hundred Percent

by Christina M.

Every Friday morning my friends and I sit on the rug in class and practice our spelling words before the weekly test. We have a contest to see who can spell the words the fastest. One of us sits in our teacher's chair and reads the spelling words. Whoever slaps the floor first gets a two-second head start spelling the word.

A few weeks ago, Miguel had been reading the words, and Kevin and I were spelling them. For one of the words, I lifted *my* hand in such a hurry that it flew back and hit *my* nose. We all laughed hysterically. Miguel laughed so hard he fell out of the teacher's chair, and that started us laughing all over again.

Our weekly contest works out well even when nothing funny happens. We get one hundred percent on our spelling tests! You should try it. It's a fun way to study spelling words.

Your Turn

Write two or three paragraphs about a school contest that you have entered or that you would like to enter. Tell about what happened to you and how you felt. Be sure to use a topic sentence and supporting details in each paragraph. Use the writer's checklist to check your writing.



Writer's Checklist

- Ideas and Content:** Are my ideas clear?
- Organization:** Did I use a topic sentence to create a strong beginning for my **paragraph**?
- Voice:** Do the details tell how I feel? Do they make my writing sound like something I would have written?
- Word Choice:** Did I choose strong words to tell what is happening?
- Sentence Fluency:** Did I join related sentences to make compound sentences?
- Conventions:** Did I capitalize proper nouns?
Did I check my spelling?