

FATHER KNOWS BEST

THE SPELLING BEE

(#3760)

Screenplay by  
Roswell Rogers  
FINAL DRAFT  
November 29, 1956

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(#3760)

SET LIST

INTERIORS:

LIVING ROOM  
KITCHEN  
BETTY'S BEDROOM  
HALLWAY  
MOTEL  
MOTEL BEDROOM  
MOTEL FRONT ROOM  
SCHOOL AUDITORIUM--THE STAGE

EXTERIORS:

SIDEWALK  
STREET CORNER  
MOTEL

CAST LIST

JIM  
MARGARET  
BETTY  
HUD  
KATHY

MARA ZERNEY  
SPELLING MASTER  
MRS. ZERNEY'S VOICE  
SPELLERS #1, #2, #3  
HORN RIMS #5  
SKINNY BOY'S VOICE #7  
GIRL'S VOICE #8

THE SPELLING BEE

FADE IN:

EXT. SIDEWALK - DAY

1           MOVING SHOT KATHY 1  
          as she races along the sidewalk, in her school clothes,  
          clutching a certificate (about 5 x 8) in her hand.

WIPE TO:

EXT. STREET CORNER - DAY

2           MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT KATHY 2  
          as she races into the scene, almost has to back pedal to  
          make the corner. She races out of sight.

WIPE TO:

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

3           TWO SHOT KATHY AND MARGARET 3  
          Kathy, breathing hard from her run, is standing in front of  
          Margaret, who is seated in a chair, where she has evidently  
          been doing some mending. Margaret is now holding the certi-  
          ficate.

MARGARET

Champion?! Why, angel, this is  
wonderful! Champion speller  
of your room. When did this  
happen? Was the contest today?

Kathy, still breathing hard, nods.

MARGARET

(continuing)  
Well, this is wonderful. I  
never realized you were this  
good a speller.

32

3

CONTINUED:

3

KATHY

I didn't either.

MARGARET

Your father's going to be very proud of you.

KATHY

Do you think a thing like this is worth a big, fat piece of cake?

MARGARET

Yes, but not now, before dinner.

KATHY

I mean now, before dinner. Cake tastes so much better when you're not supposed to eat it.

We hear the front door o.s. CAMERA PULLS BACK.

MARGARET

(giving in)

Welll -- in view of this --

She indicates certificate.

KATHY

Thanks, mommy.

To Jim, who appears in the hallway in b.g.:

KATHY

(continuing)

Hi, daddy. Look at what mommy's got. Big surprise.

She heads toward the kitchen. Jim, with hat and brief case, halts in the hallway.

JIM

What's the big surprise?

MARGARET

(holding up certificate)

Look; we have a champion in our family.

JIM

(moving forward)

Oh? Champion what? Hog caller?

74

3

CONTINUED: (2)

3

MARGARET

No. Speller.

She hands him the certificate, which he reads with interest.

JIM

Well, what do you know about that?

MARGARET

Pretty good, eh?

JIM

Amazing. After seeing the way Bud mangles half the words in the English language, I thought spelling was a lost art. At least in our family.

Bud, during the above speech, appears from the stairway, looking at a Hot Rod magazine.

BUD

Did I hear somebody take my revered and invulnerable name in vain?

JIM

You certainly did. Here, I'd like you to take a look at this.

He holds certificate for Bud to see.

BUD

Yeah. What is it?

JIM

Read it. Your little sister walked off with the spelling honors in her class room.

BUD

Yeah? So what?

JIM

So what? Could you do it?

BUD

Welll -- can she do forty push-ups without stopping?

JIM

No, but --

101

BUD

Can she peg a baseball from  
third base over to first on  
a dead run?

JIM

Look, we're talking about  
spelling.

BUD

What's so great about spelling?  
Can you make a living out of  
it? Is that a career?

MARGARET

No, it's not a career but it --

BUD

Did you ever hear anyone say,  
'Ah, there goes John D.  
Rockefeller, the millionaire  
speller?'

JIM

Bud --

BUD

Or - 'Oh, look, J. P. Morgan!  
When he was only six, he used  
to spell words on a street  
corner for a few pennies.  
Now he's head of the First  
National Spelling Corporation!'  
(turns, heads  
toward stairs)

If you ask me, the kid is wasting  
her time.

Jim watches him go, then chuckles.

JIM

You don't think there's a little  
jealousy there, do you.

Jim hands the certificate back to Margaret and heads toward  
the hall closet, as Kathy enters, eating a large piece of  
cake which she is carrying on a plate. Some of the frosting  
is on her face, making her look little like a great spelling  
expert.

KATHY

Well, what do you think of me,  
daddy?

121

3

CONTINUED: (4)

3

JIM

Well, sir, I think you're a genius, and that you richly deserve to be decorated - with all that cake frosting.

KATHY

(grins)

Yeah. I just hope I do as good in the contest tomorrow.

MARGARET

Tomorrow? What -- what contest is that?

KATHY

Oh - now I gotta be in a contest to pick the champ of the whole grammar school.

MARGARET

(rising)

Well, for heaven's sake! Why didn't you tell me?? Tomorrow? We'll have to get you ready for it!

JIM

Yes, we'd better get in a little training --

MARGARET

And I'll have to fix something nice for you to wear!

Margaret hurries toward the stairs, as Jim hurries toward the hall closet. Kathy looks at them a little puzzled, then turns toward the camera, WHICH MOVES IN ON her.

KATHY

That's the trouble with parents; they always get so nervous.

FADE OUT.



INT. KITCHEN - DAY

4

GROUP SHOT FAVORING KATHY

4

She is seated at the breakfast table, finishing a waffle. She has on a fairly nice dress. Jim sitting beside her and Margaret standing near her both are quite attentive to Kathy. Bud, also seated at the breakfast table, is a little disgusted with all this attention being bestowed upon Kathy.

MARGARET

Are you sure you don't want another waffle? I'll be glad to make more.

Kathy shakes her head.

JIM

Well now, don't fill her up too much. We don't want her to go into the contest today feeling loggy.

MARGARET

But she has to keep her strength up.

BUD

What's she going into, a weight lifting contest?

Margaret disposes of Bud with a withering glance. Kathy, finished, rises.

MARGARET

(to Kathy)

If you're finished, you'd better run upstairs and wash the syrup off your face...And brush your hair better.

KATHY

Okay.

She exits.

BUD

(muttering)

Boy, boy, what a lotta fuss over nothin'. C-A-T, cat. D-O-G, dog. Gazil, gazel

(rises)

Oh, brother.



4 CONTINUED:

4

MARGARET

Well, you'd better get your  
books and be on your...

JIM

(suddenly realizing  
what Bud had said)  
Wait a minute! What did you  
say? Gazel, gazil??

Bud, who had started to leave, halts, looks at Jim and thinks  
very hard for a moment.

BUD

(questioningly)  
G-U-Z-I-L?

Jim just stares at him coldly.

BUD

(continuing)  
G-U-Z-E-L?

Jim continues to stare at him. Bud, knowing when he's licked,  
slowly turns and heads toward the dining room. In the  
doorway he pauses.

5 CLOSEUP BUD  
looking very perplexed.

5

BUD

(to himself)  
G-U-ZZIEL?

He shakes his head helplessly, and starts forward.

INT. BETTY'S BEDROOM - DAY6 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT KATHY AND BETTY  
Kathy is standing in front of the dresser, brushing her  
bangs, as Betty in b.g. is putting on a blouse.

6

BETTY

Well, are you all excited and  
jumpy about the big contest?

KATHY

I guess so.

Kathy sees Betty's lipstick, puts the brush down, picks up  
the lipstick, with the idea of using it.

6 CONTINUED:

6

BETTY

Well, you don't much sound like it. If I was in your place ... Hey, put down my lipstick.

KATHY

Well, don't you think I -- ?

BETTY

No!

KATHY

Well, I'm going to be standing up in front of the whole school, so I oughta look --

BETTY

(moves to dresser)  
No! You look all right.

She takes lipstick.

KATHY

Well, gosh.  
(reaches into jewelry box)  
Then can I wear some of your jewelry?

BETTY

No! You're entering a spelling bee, - not a modeling contest.

Betty picks up the hair brush to add a few last minute touches to her own hair.

KATHY

What's this old --

BETTY

Kathy, stop pawing around in there.

KATHY

I was just going to ask what's this old penny with a hole in it?

BETTY

Oh, that's nothing. Belonged to Ralph. He claimed it was his good luck penny.

6 CONTINUED: (2)

6

KATHY

Good luck penny?

BETTY

He said he always rubbed his hands on it for good luck before he threw the shot put ... Till one day it scratched him and got blood poisoning or something.

KATHY

(rubbing her hand  
on coin)

It is kinda rough. Can I have it?

BETTY

I don't care, but what do you want that old thing for?

MARGARET'S VOICE

Kathy! Hurry up Kathy, or you'll be late for school!

KATHY

(calling)

Okay, I'm coming!

She heads for the door.

BETTY

Now you do real good today, squeegee! Spell 'em all down!

KATHY

(casually slipping  
coin in pocket)

I'll try.

She exits.

BETTY

(calling after her)

I'll be waiting anxiously to hear how you do!

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

7

MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT MARGARET JIM AND KATHY  
Jim, ready to leave for work, and Margaret are near the foot of the stairs looking up as Kathy comes down.

7

87

7

CONTINUED:

7

MARGARET

Better hurry, angel.

JIM

Give it everything you've got today, old man.

KATHY

I wish you were going to be there, daddy.

JIM

I wish so too, kitten ... I'll be there in spirit. And your mother'll be there.

MARGARET

Right in the front row.

JIM

So, good luck, kitten!  
(kisses her)  
Do your very best!

KATHY

Okay ...  
(heads for door;  
to Margaret:)  
You be sure and be there.

MARGARET

Don't worry! You can count on me. Hurry now ... don't be late for school.

KATHY

Bye.

Kathy goes out the front door; Jim and Margaret smile proudly as they watch her leave.

DISSOLVE TO:

INT. HALLWAY - DAY

8 CLOSEUP THE HALL CLOCK

8

It indicates a little after five. CAMERA PULLS BACK to include Betty, looking at the clock with consternation. She turns away and starts to pace the floor. As she hears the front door start to open, she turns toward it, and her face brightens hopeful, but then falls a bit, as Jim enters.

BETTY

Oh... it's you.

JIM

Well hurry up, tell me. How did Kathy come out?

BETTY

I don't know. They're not home yet?

JIM

Not home yet?

Bud comes charging downstairs.

BUD

Hi! How'd you d---  
(sees Jim)

Oh... I thought you were Kathy.

JIM

(looking at watch)

I can't imagine what would take them so long. Unless maybe they started giving them real tough words like -- 'mule.'

He looks archly at Bud. Bud turns away, trying to ignore this. He moves to the door to look out the narrow window. Jim gets rid of his hat and briefcase.

BETTY

I was wondering if I should try to call the school --

BUD

Here they come! Here they come!

Betty and Jim move toward the door.

BUD

(continuing)

Oh-oh... she lost. I can tell by the look on her face.



8 CONTINUED:

8

They all look disappointed at this news. Bud opens the door.

JIM  
Well -- maybe not.

Margaret and Kathy appear, neither one of them looking very happy. Margaret, however, brightens on seeing the others. Kathy marches on by and goes to the living room.

JIM  
Hi.

BETTY  
Well -- might as well give us the whole gruesome story...

BUD  
Did she lose bad?

MARGARET  
She didn't lose. She won.

JIM  
Won?

MARGARET  
(holds up ribbon)  
Here's her ribbon... School champ.

The others break into big smiles. They turn toward living room.

BETTY  
Kathy!

JIM  
Why, you little faker!

Betty goes to the living room, followed by Bud.

BETTY  
Trying to fool us, eh?

Jim is about to follow them, but Margaret puts her hand on his arm.

MARGARET  
(lowering her voice)  
She's not faking.



8 CONTINUED: (2)

8

JIM

(puzzled)  
What do you mean?

MARGARET

She's not happy. She's frightened to death because now she's supposed to go to Lafayette and compete for the county championship.

JIM

The county? Really?

MARGARET

(nods)  
She says she won't go.

JIM

I -- I don't get this... When did she become frightened? This morning she -- she seemed to be taking the whole thing in stride.

MARGARET

I think it began when she suddenly found herself out on that stage, facing the whole school. I could almost sense it.

JIM

Hmm. Well -- how did she do? Well obviously she did all right... she won.

MARGARET

Actually it was remarkable. She stood up and spelled words I'm sure I would have missed. But I could tell she was getting awfully nervous toward the end.

JIM

Hmm. Well that's strange.  
(turns toward  
living room;  
heartily)  
Well, Kathy, old man --  
(walks forward)  
I'm mighty proud of you.

INT. LIVING ROOM - DAY

9 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT KATHY BETTY AND BUD 9  
Kathy is sitting on the davenport, looking disconsolate. Betty is sitting beside her, looking at her. Bud is half perched on the arm of the davenport. In the b.g. we see Jim approaching, followed by Margaret.

BETTY

Gee, I should think you'd consider this a big opportunity. It'll be fun going to another town.

Kathy just shakes her head.

JIM

Sure it will be... You'll have a fine time, Kathy.

BUD

She says she's not going.

JIM

Oh well, a fellow's bound to feel that way now... after the excitement of this contest and all. Things will look different tomorrow.

He pats Kathy reassuringly on the head.

KATHY

(shakes her head)  
I'd be too scared.

BETTY

No, you won't. It'll be no different from the contest here.

KATHY

Well that's the trouble. I was scared in this one.

JIM

Well, you'll get over that. That happens to everyone. And it'd be a shame to miss out on a thing like this...

(to Margaret)

When is this contest at Lafayette?

MARGARET

Saturday.

9 CONTINUED:

9

JIM

Oh well good. Maybe we can all go. Make a family trip out of it. How does that sound, kitten?

Kathy shakes her head.

BETTY

Oh Kathy, that's ridiculous...

MARGARET

Uh -- I think maybe we ought to just forget it for now... Anyway it's time to get dinner.

She motions to Bud and Jim to leave.

JIM

Yes, I think that's what we all need -- a good dinner.

He and Bud move toward hallway and exit, as Margaret moves toward dining room.

MARGARET

Come on, Betty... I need your help.

Margaret exits.

BETTY

All right.

Betty rises.

KATHY

Boy, was I scared. Old knees shook like a coupla ma'-cucuraches.

BETTY

Look, the important thing is you won. And if you're that good here, you'll be just as good at the county contest.

KATHY

(shakes her head)  
I was just lucky. I spelled some words I never heard of before. I don't know how I did it.

9

CONTINUED: (2)

9

BETTY

You're just a natural speller,  
that's all. Just happen to  
have a knack for it.

KATHY

(shakes her head)  
I don't know how I did it.

MARGARET'S VOICE

Betty!

BETTY

I'm coming.  
(as she leaves)  
Well don't worry. Things'll  
work out fine.

Betty exits. Kathy sighs, thrusts one hand in her dress  
pocket.

KATHY

(to herself)  
I don't know how I did it.

Suddenly something seems to be occurring to her. She looks  
down at her dress pocket as she pulls something from it,  
and stares at it.

INSERT: THE PENNY WITH THE HOLE IN IT  
in Kathy's hand.

BACK TO SCENE 9

CAMERA MOVES IN on Kathy as she studies the coin. Then she  
locks up, wonderingly. She looks back at the coin.  
CAMERA PULLS BACK SLIGHTLY as Bud enters the scene, with  
his hot rod magazine, slumps down on the other end of the  
davenport to read. Kathy quickly closes her hand around  
the coin. She glances at Bud, thoughtfully.

KATHY

Uh -- Bud, did you ever have a  
lucky penny?

BUD

Oh yeah, I guess so. I used  
to have some.

KATHY

Are they - uh -- I mean do they  
really bring you good luck?

9 CONTINUED: (3)

9

Bud, trying to read his magazine, merely shrugs.

KATHY

Could they help you do things  
you can't do?

BUD

I doubt it.

KATHY

But maybe?

BUD

(disinterested)

Maybe.

Kathy steals another look at the coin, then turns to Bud again.

KATHY

Bud -- give me a hard word to  
spell, a real hard word.

BUD

Uh -- Gazel.

KATHY

No, I mean a real hard one...  
One I don't know how to spell...  
Find one in your magazine.

Bud is a touch annoyed, much preferring to read.

BUD

Uh -- okay, here's one.  
Transmission.

KATHY

Too easy.

BUD

Uh -- differential.

KATHY

(slight pause)

Yes...that's good. I don't  
know that.

(grips coin)

Uh -- D-i-f -- f-e-r-e-n-t-i-a-l.

BUD

(surprised)

That's right.



9 CONTINUED: (4)

9

KATHY

Now give me another one I don't know.

BUD

Uh --

As he looks for another word. Kathy covertly places the coin on the davenport beside her, out of her hand.

BUD

How's this? Carburetor.

KATHY

Yes, that's good. Uh --  
C-a-r--- Uh --

BUD

(trying to help,  
but actually throw-  
ing her off)  
Car-ber-a-tor.

KATHY

C-a-r-b-e-r-a-t-o-r.

BUD

Wrong!

KATHY

(face lights up)  
It works!

BUD

(puzzled)  
What works? You missed that one.

Kathy picks up the penny and rises.

KATHY

I know.  
(heads toward hall)  
Daddy! Daddy, what time do we  
leave for Lafayette?

Bud looks after her pretty puzzled, as we:

FADE OUT.

MIDDLE COMMERCIAL



FADE IN:

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

10 CLOSEUP SIGN "LAFAYETTE VILLA MOTEL" 10

DISSOLVE THROUGH TO:

11 CLOSE SHOT DOOR OF MOTEL 11

On this door is a small sign which says: OFFICE. Above the door is the number ONE. The door opens, and out comes Jim, hat on, carrying a hotel type key. CAMERA PANS WITH him as he moves along a walk toward an adjoining cottage.

JIM

(to family o.s.)

We're right here in number two.  
So the car's okay right there.

The CAMERA NOW PICKS UP the Anderson car, parked in front of the cottage which is marked #2. Beyond this, parked in front of cottage #3 is an old, worn out rattletrap of a car. Standing beside the door of #3 is a girl about Kathy's size, perhaps a touch smaller. She is wearing a shabby dress and run over shoes. Her eyes are large and round and wistful, and she intently watches every move the Anderson's make, particularly Kathy. As Jim unlocks the door of #2, the family starts to pile out of the car, Bud going to the back of the car to open the trunk and take out luggage. Betty, who follows Kathy out of the car, has a list of spelling words in her hand. Kathy is carrying a jacket and a very small overnight bag.

BETTY

Indispensable. Come on, Kathy,  
spell it.

KATHY

Oh heck, I'm tired of practicing.  
I practiced all the way here.

Margaret has gone on into the motel. Bud now passes Kathy and Betty with two suitcases.

BUD

Gangway!

BETTY

Well you have to keep at it if  
you expect to win. Indispensable.

Kathy walks toward the door, Betty following her.

11 CONTINUED:

11

KATHY

(wearily)

I-n-d-i-s-p-e-n-s-a-b-l-e.

BETTY

Right. Corroborate.

They go into the motel. The little girl next door carefully watching them.

INT. MOTEL LIVING ROOM - DAY

12 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT MARGARET, JIM AND BUD 12

This is a room with inexpensive but fairly new furniture, consisting mainly of a pair of twin beds, two chairs, a chest of drawers. There is a door to the bathroom, and a door to another bedroom. Margaret is looking around the room, as Jim comes out of the bedroom. Bud, with the suitcases, is heading toward the bedroom.

JIM

Yes, this'll work all right.

Kathy enters the scene, followed by Betty.

BUD

Where do you want these,  
in here?

KATHY

C-o-r-r-o-b-o-r-a-t-e.

JIM

Yes, I think so.

Bud goes into the bedroom. Kathy puts down her burdens.

JIM

(to Margaret)

There's a double and a single  
bed in there... So, you three  
girls can take that room.

MARGARET

(going into  
bedroom)

I better look before I agree  
to anything.

BETTY

Heterogeneous.

KATHY

Hetro---oh-oh, I don't know  
that.

25

12 CONTINUED:

12

BETTY

Well try it.

KATHY

H-e-t---uh--

JIM

(to Betty)

Don't you think you ought to let her rest a while?

KATHY

H-e-t---uh--- uh---

BETTY

Keep going.

GIRL'S VOICE O.S.

(just loud enough to be heard)

H-e-t-e-r-o-g-e-n-e-o-u-s.

Jim, Betty and Kathy do a double take. Look at one another, then toward the open door. After a moments hesitation, Kathy goes to the door and looks out.

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

13 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT KATHY AND GIRL  
Kathy is looking toward the little girl in front of #3  
wonderingly. The little girl looks embarrassed.

13

KATHY

Did you spell that word?

GIRL

(nods)

I didn't know you heard me.

KATHY

(relieved)

Oh, well I wondered! I thought maybe there were ghosts or --

(suddenly)

Hey, are you in the spelling contest?

Betty appears beside Kathy. The girl nods.

KATHY

Oh. Me too.

13 CONTINUED:

13

BETTY

What's your name? And where  
are you from?

GIRL

Mara Zerney. I'm from Watts-  
ville.

KATHY

Oh. I'm Kathy Anderson from  
Spr ----

WOMAN'S VOICE O.S.

Mara! Come in now. I've fixed  
some sandwiches.

In the partly open door of #3, Mara's mother appears. She is a tired looking woman, middle forties, wearing a faded bathrobe over her slip. She glances at Kathy and Betty, then takes Mara's hand and leads her inside, Mara continuing to look, somewhat longingly, at Kathy.

WOMAN

Come on, Mara.

They exit.

BETTY

Well -- looks like you have  
some tough competition there,  
squeegee.

(takes Kathy's  
hand)

You better get back to practicing.  
Especially on 'heterogeneous'.

She leads Kathy back into the motel, Kathy looking toward #3 thoughtfully and with a touch of her fear returning.

INT. MOTEL BEDROOM - DAY

14 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT KATHY MARGARET AND BETTY 14  
Margaret is kneeling behind Kathy, buttoning the back of the dress Kathy is going to wear in the contest. It is a pretty dress with a pocket in it, and perhaps a touch small for her. Betty is taking one of her own dresses from a suitcase lying on the double bed. Beside the suitcase is the spelling list, at which Betty glances.

BETTY

Effervescence.

14 CONTINUED:

14

KATHY

Oh I know that word backwards.

BETTY

They're not going to ask you to spell them backwards. Try it forwards.

KATHY

E-f-f-e-r---

MARGARET

I don't know, I think this dress is too small. Maybe you ought to wear the other one.

KATHY

It's all right. V-e-s-c-e-n-c-e.

BETTY

Right. Apocryphal.

MARGARET

(rising)

Don't you think you're over-training her.

BETTY

Not with the competition she's going to have. You should hear that little Mara next to us spell.

KATHY

She's not practicing thought. She's eating sandwiches her Mommy fixed for her.

MARGARET

Fixing sandwiches? There are no kitchens in these places. Why don't they go out to eat?

BETTY

I can guess why. It's to save money. Didn't you see the dress Mara had on? And those shoes. I felt so sorry for her. Apocryphal.

KATHY

Uh - a-p-o-c-r --- o --

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14 CONTINUED: (2)

14

BETTY

No...Y. Apocry - phal.

KATHY

a-p-o-c-r-y --- f-a-l.

BETTY

No...P-h-a-l. Now try the whole thing. Apocryphal.

MARGARET

I think there's some white shoe cleaner in the car.

She exits.

KATHY

A-p-o-c-r-y-p-h-----

INT. MOTEL FRONT ROOM - DAY

15 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT MARGARET BUD AND JIM 15  
Margaret is moving from the bedroom to the front door, in front of Bud and Jim, who are seated in the two chairs, reading sections of the local paper.

BUD

Hey, they got a good movie playing here. Why don't we go after this spelling nonsense is over?

MARGARET

Oh, you can go to movies at home.

BUD

They seem different in another town though...

As Margaret pulls open the door, which had been standing open just a bit, she startles Mara, who had been standing outside. Mara backs away.

MARGARET

Oh...Hello there...You must be Mara.

MARA

I--uh--Could Kathy come out?



15 CONTINUED:

15

MARGARET

Not right now, she's getting ready. But won't you come in?

MARA

Well --

Diffidently she enters as Margaret holds the door open for her.

JIM

Well, I hear you're going to give Kathy a little competition today.

Margaret goes on out to get the shoe cleaner. Mara hardly hears Jim, being so interested in taking in everything in the room with her big, wistful eyes. She looks at a suitcase on one of the twin beds, beside which are a couple of books. She moves near them and touches the books lovingly.

MARA

These are very nice books.

JIM

Do you like books, Mara?

MARA

Oh yes. Did you know they're giving a whole set of the encyclopedias to the winner today?

JIM

Yes, I know that. Sounds like a fine prize.

MARA

Oh, yes.

Kathy enters from the bedroom, is surprised to see Mara.

KATHY

Oh, hello.

MARA

Hello.

(looks Kathy over intently)

That's a pretty dress.

KATHY

It's kinda old. Hey, do you feel kinda scared inside? You know -- jumpy and stuff?

15 CONTINUED: (2)

15

Margaret re-enters with the shoe cleaner. Betty enters from the bedroom.

MARGARET

Mara, I think I saw your Mother looking for you. She probably wants you to get ready for the contest.

MARA

Get ready? I'm ready.

MARGARET

I mean go and change you're dres--

(suddenly realizing)  
that is, I mean...uh...Well,  
I think she's looking for you.

MRS. ZERNEY'S VOICE

Mara! Mara!

MARA

Coming.

Mara takes another longing look around the room and then runs out. The members of the family all look at one another with the same thought in mind.

BETTY

Isn't that a shame...

JIM

And on an occasion like this...  
you know it's a big moment in  
her life.

KATHY

Mommy -- you said this dress  
was too small for me anyway...  
Would -- could she wear it?

MARGARET

Yes, certainly...that is if it  
wouldn't embarrass her to accep---

This is all Kathy needs; she tears out the door.

KATHY

Mara! Mara!

WIPE TO:

EXT. MOTEL - DAY

16 CLOSE SHOT DOOR TO #3 16  
 The door opens and out comes Mara, wearing Kathy's dress. She moves a few steps from the door, stops to admire her dress, as her mother comes out of the door, locks it. Mara runs her hands lovingly over the dress and sighs ecstatically. Her mother smiles at her, a sad, happy smile, then takes Mara's hand and moves to the old wreck of a car, and they climb in.

INT. MOTEL FRONT ROOM - DAY

17 CLOSE SHOT BUD 17  
 He is looking out the front window, now he turns and moves away from it. O.s. we hear the struggling, rattling sound of the motor of the old car as it starts and pulls away.

BUD

Boy, is that little Mara  
 happy with the dress. I  
 wish you could've seen the  
 look in her eyes as she left  
 just now.

CAMERA PULLS BACK to INCLUDE Jim, sitting in a chair, where he has been reading a book.

JIM

(looking at  
 his watch)  
 Say, we'd better be leaving  
 too.  
 (calling)  
 Kathy! Is Kathy ready?

18 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT 18  
 as she emerges from the bedroom door, putting on her coat.

BETTY

She's all ready. Let's go.

Margaret follows her out of the bedroom, all ready to leave.

MARGARET

Hurry up, Kathy. You don't  
 want to be late.

CAMERA PANS them toward the door, where Jim is rising from his chair, putting the book aside.

18 CONTINUED:

18

JIM

Bud said little Mara looked pretty happy with the dress.

MARGARET

Oh, I'm so glad.  
(turning back toward  
bedroom door; a  
little impatiently)  
Kathy! Come on, we're leaving.  
(slight pause)  
Kathy!

They all look toward the bedroom door.

19 CLOSE SHOT THE BEDROOM DOOR 19  
Kathy appears, in a different dress, looking frantic and frightened.

KATHY

I can't go yet! I can't find it. It's lost!

MARGARET'S VOICE

What's lost?

KATHY

My good luck penny! I've looked everywhere. It's gone!

Margaret enters the scene as the CAMERA PULLS BACK.

MARGARET

Oh well come on, we haven't time to bother with a thing like that.

She tries to take Kathy's hand, but Kathy pulls back.

KATHY

No, no, I can't go without it! It's the only way I can spell.

Betty enters the scene.

MARGARET

Oh now you know that's silly.

19 CONTINUED:

19

BETTY

What good luck penny are you talking about? The one you found in my jewelry box?

KATHY

(nods)

I've gotta find it!

BETTY

Kathy, there's nothing to that good luck stuff.

KATHY

There is with this one. I had it with me when I won the school contest. That's how I could spell those words I didn't even know.

BETTY

No, Kathy, no it isn't.

KATHY

Yes it is...I tested it... with Bud.

(looking o.s.)

Didn't I Bud?

20 TWO SHOT JIM AND BUD

20

Bud looks nonplussed, as Jim turns to Bud for some kind of an answer.

BUD

I don't know what she's talking about. All I did was give her some words out of a hot rod magazine to spell.

21 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT KATHY MARGARET AND BETTY

21

KATHY

Yes, and when I held the penny I got it right...and when I didn't, I missed. I've got to find it! I've got to!

Jim enters the scene during her speech, and now he picks her up.

21 CONTINUED:

21

JIM

Honey, there's no time to hunt. And besides it's not the penny that wins for you... It's your own ability...and you still have that.

As he walks toward the door, carrying her, she starts to cry, and the others look on helplessly and sympathetically as they follow.

KATHY

(sobbing)  
It's the penny...the penny.

WIPE TO:

INT. SCHOOL AUDITORIUM THE STAGE - DAY

22 CLOSE SHOT THE SPELLING MASTER

22

He is standing on the stage, behind are the grammar school contestants, seated in a semi-circle of chairs. The Spelling Master is a middle-aged superintendant of schools.

SPELLING MASTER

And it is a thrill for me to again preside at the annual county-sponsored spelling contest, and to see in action all these fine, young, intelligent, competitors. I wish we could award each one of them a set of encyclopedias instead of just the winner. All right now --

During this speech the CAMERA HAS BEEN SLOWLY PULLING BACK, and now the Spelling Master turns toward the contestants as he backs toward the side of the stage where there is a stand on which his spelling lists, etc., rest.

SPELLING MASTER

You all know the rules: one miss eliminates you, and you leave the stage. This continues until we have two finalists. So spell carefully and good luck to each of you.



22 CONTINUED:

22

By now the CAMERA HAS INCLUDED all of the contestants, an array of ten boys and girls, ages 8 to 11, in their best clothes, some confident, some tense, but all eager... except Kathy. She sits with her head bowed, quite miserable. Each child has card bearing a number hung around his or her neck. Kathy is #6, flanked by a stocky boy with horn-rimmed glasses, #5, and a tall skinny boy, #7. Mara is #4. A cute, freckle faced little girl, who lisps, is #3. The Spelling Master is now at the stand, looking over the spelling list.

23 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE ANDERSONS

23

they are seated in the audience, looking about as miserable as Kathy, as they look toward her o.s.

MARGARET

Oh, the poor little thing.  
I wish there was something  
we could do.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

All right, here we go for  
round one.

JIM

I wish we'd known about that  
penny business sooner. May-  
be then we could have --

BETTY

Shhhh.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Number one, Please stand.  
Your word: Inconceivable.

24 TWO SHOT SPELLERS #1 and 2

24

One rises, worried, a shock of strawish hair hangs over part of his forehead. He hesitates, then plunges into the word.

NUMBER ONE

I-n-c-o-n-c-e-i-v-a-b-l-e.

He gives a big sigh and a big grin as he sits down.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Correct. Next -- vicissitude.

NUMBER TWO

(rises)

V-i-c-i-s---uh---c-i-t-u-d-e.

There is a slight groan from the audience o.s.

24 CONTINUED:

24

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Oh, I'm sorry. That is wrong.  
Number Three...vicissitude.

Dejectedly Number Two leaves the stage and the CAMERA PANS SLIGHTLY to pick up #3, the freckle-faced girl, who rises.

NUMBER THREE

(lisps)  
Vithithitude. V-i-thee-i-eth-  
eth-i-t-u-d-e.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Right. Next...Loquacious.

CAMERA PANS SLIGHTLY to Mara, who rises.

MARA

(eagerly)  
L-o-q-u-a-c-i-o-u-s.

Turns toward Master o.s. anxiously.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Right.

She sighs with relief, and happily sits down. And the CAMERA PANS to Number Five, Horn Rims, who rises, smugly.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Voracious.

HORN RIMS (#5)

(confidently)  
V-o-r-a-c-i-o-u-s.

He sits down, knowing full well he's right. CAMERA PANS to Kathy, still with head slightly bowed, looking miserable.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Good. Next -- Physiology.

Kathy rises, looks up, scowling, tries to think.

25 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE FAMILY

25

They are looking at the stage, tensely, hopefully but yet feeling this is the end.

26 SHOT AS BEFORE KATHY

26

KATHY

(slowly -- not with  
difficulty, but with  
diffidence)

P-h-y-s-i-o-l-o-g-y.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Correct. Next -- Solicitous.

Kathy looks a little surprised that she got it right, sits down. The CAMERA PULLS BACK SLIGHTLY to INCLUDE Mara, who is looking toward Kathy, smiling and nodding at her, happy that Kathy was successful.

SKINNY BOY'S VOICE (#7)

S-o-l-i-c-i-t-o-u-s.

Kathy tries to smile back at Mara, but can't muster much of a smile in her state of mind. Turns away and bows her head.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Right. Obeisance.

Mara has taken a small object from the dress pocket and is nervously flipping it from one hand to the other. Kathy now does a double take, looking back toward Mara, staring intently at the object.

GIRL'S VOICE (#8)

O-b-e-i-s-a-n-c-e.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Correct. Next -- tumultuous.

Kathy now aware this is the penny, is looking at it frantically, desperately. The boy in the middle is a little disturbed by this.

GIRL'S VOICE (#8)

T-u-m-u-l---

Mara is nervously flipping the coin, flips it on the floor. As she leans over to get it, Kathy, like a flash, jumps forward and beats Mara to the coin. Mara, as well as the boy between them, looks pretty surprised at this maneuver.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Here! Here! What's going on?  
What are we fighting over?

KATHY

(looking up toward  
Master o.s.)

Nothing...Just -- an old penny.

27

26 CONTINUED: 26

She gets back into her seat, clutching the penny. Mara, not understanding, feels she's done something wrong to her new friend, looks worried.

27 CLOSE SHOT SPELLING MASTER 27

SPELLING MASTER

Considering what's at stake here today, I hardly think a penny is worth bothering with. From now on, let's not have any more -- uh -- tumultuous conduct.

(turning to #8 o.s.)

All right, number eight... Once more...Tumultuous.

28 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE FAMILY 28

They look somewhat embarrassed over Kathy's conduct, and gravely concerned over her desperate attitude.

29 CLOSE SHOT MARA'S MOTHER 29

seated in the audience, worried, as she wonders what's going on.

GIRL'S VOICE

T-u-m-u-l-t-u-o-u-s.

WIPE TO:

30 CLOSE SHOT THE SPELLING MASTER 30  
He is smiling at the audience as he wipes his glasses with his pocket handkerchief.

SPELLING MASTER

Well, let's see now, we've had --  
uh --

(checks notes  
on stand)

seven rounds... seven hot and  
heavy rounds, and let's see how  
many survivors we have.

Turns toward contestants chairs.

31 PAN SHOT 31  
Starting on boy in number one chair. CAMERA CONTINUES  
AROUND the semi-circle of chairs. Two is vacant. The  
lispng girl in three is still there, and so is Mara, number  
four. Five is vacant, and then Kathy, who, still clutching  
the coin, now looks grimly determined and confident. As the  
CAMERA PASSES Mara, she is looking over at Kathy, wondering  
if she still has a friend in Kathy. As CAMERA PICKS OUT  
remaining contestants -

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

One... two... three... four....

The CAMERA now PANS along the rest of the chairs, and they  
are all empty. The CAMERA WINDS UP on the Spelling Master.

SPELLING MASTER

And that's all there is. Four.  
All right, we have to find our  
two finalists in this group. So  
here we go. Number one --  
Isosceles.

32 CLOSE SHOT BOY NUMBER ONE 32  
He rises, looks worried and doubtful.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Isosceles. As in isosceles triangle.

BOY NUMBER ONE

Uh - I - s-s-o-s-c-e-l-e-s.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Oh, I am sorry. That's not right.

The boy bangs himself on the head, then with a sheepish  
grin, turns and marches off the stage, as the CAMERA PANS  
to the freckle-faced girl, who rises.

32 CONTINUED:

32

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Isosceles.

GIRL NUMBER THREE

Ithotheles. I-eth-eth-o-eth-eth-  
e-l-e-eth.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

No, that is not correct. I am sorry.

The girl shakes her head, smiles wryly, and walks off the stage as Mara next to her rises. The crowd o.s. groans as the girl misses.

33 CLOSE SHOT MARA'S MOTHER

33

She grips her hands together prayerfully.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Number four - Isosceles.

MARA

I-s-o --  
(pause)  
s-c-e-l-e-s.

There is applause from the audience.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

That is right!

Mara sighs gratefully and sits down. The CAMERA PANS to grim, determined Kathy... She rises.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Number six - think hard now - or  
it's all over. Proscenium.

Kathy winces at this, then takes his advice and thinks hard.

34 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE FAMILY

34

They are all fighting for Kathy.

BETTY

Oh, that's rough! That's rough!

35 CLOSE SHOT KATHY

35

She looks down at her hand and clenches her fist tighter.

33



35 CONTINUED:

35

KATHY

Uh -- P-r-o-s --  
(long pause;  
then fast)  
c-e-n-i-u-m.

There is a burst of applause.

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

Right!

36 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE FAMILY  
as they react to Kathy's success.

36

37 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT KATHY AND MARA  
Kathy is still standing, as the Spelling Master walks into  
the scene, taking Mara's hand, pulling her up, and standing  
between the two girls.

37

SPELLING MASTER

And so here we have our two finalists...  
Two very excellent, and very pretty  
spellers. And we're going to give  
them a few moments to relax, and re-  
gather their strength and wits before  
the final encounter. I think maybe  
we all need to relax a moment...  
I'm sure I do....

He gives a big sigh and looks proudly down at the two girls  
as we:

FADE OUT.

END COMMERCIAL

FADE IN:

INT. AUDITORIUM - DAY

38 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE FAMILY  
There is the low murmur of voices as the audience chats.

38

MARGARET

I don't know what that silly  
penny has but it certainly  
perked Kathy up. Isn't she  
amazing?

38 CONTINUED:

38

JIM

Yes she is... but I'm sorry she thinks the penny has anything to do with it.

BETTY

Look, father, don't quibble. She's winning, isn't she?

BUD

(looking toward stage o.s.)

Hey, shhhh... They're starting.

They all look toward the stage and the murmur of voices subsides.

39 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT SPELLING MASTER, KATHY AND MARA 39  
Only their two chairs remain on the stage now, and the Spelling Master's stand has been moved nearer their chairs.

SPELLING MASTER

All right, here we are now with the final round... to determine who will be our county champion, and who will win the fine set of encyclopedias... Mara Zerney of Wattsville - or Kathy Anderson of Springfield. And here we go. Ready girls?

They both nod.

SPELLING MASTER

All right, Mara, we'll start with you, and your word is -- effervescence.

Kathy reacts to this word as Mara rises and this time takes a couple of steps forward.

40 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE FAMILY 40

BETTY

Oh why couldn't that be Kathy's word! She knows that backwards!

41 AS BEFORE MARA, KATHY AND SPELLING MASTER 41  
Mara thinks, bites her lip, then begins.

MARA

E-f-f-e-r-v-e -- uh --

42 CLOSE SHOT MRS. ZERNEY  
She is nervously rubbing her hands together.

42

MRS. ZERNEY  
(to herself)  
Mara... please!... think!

43 AS BEFORE

43

MARA  
E-f-f-e-r-v-e-s-e-n-c-e.

The crowd groans.

SPELLING MASTER  
(sympathetically)  
No... that is not right.

Mara covers her face, starts to cry, starts walking away.

SPELLING MASTER  
Wait, wait... You're a finalist...  
you still may have a chance...  
Your competitor still has to spell.  
All right... Kathy.

Mara goes to her chair, sits down, hands still over face, trying to stop crying. Kathy watches her sadly, compassionately. As she rises and steps forward she continues to look back sadly at Mara. The spelling master has to call her to attention.

SPELLING MASTER  
Kathy! Effervescence.

KATHY  
Huh? Oh.

She hesitates, seems to be in a quandry; finally starts.

KATHY  
(continuing)  
E-f-f-e-r-v-e --  
(slight pause)  
cence.

Another groan from the audience, mingled with excitement.

44 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE FAMILY  
They look at one another, nonplussed over Kathy missing a word she knows.

44

44 CONTINUED:

44

SPELLING MASTER'S VOICE

No, I'm sorry. It's s-c-e-n-c-e.  
So we still have a tie!

45 AS BEFORE

45

Kathy is returning to her seat, thoughtfully. Mara is looking up, her tear-stained face brightening.

SPELLING MASTER

All right, Mara, let's see what you can do with your next word.

As she rises, Kathy halts her, gives her the penny.

46 TIGHT TWO SHOT KATHY AND MARA

46

Kathy whispers in Mara's ear.

KATHY

It's a good luck penny.

Mara looks astounded.

47 AS BEFORE

47

SPELLING MASTER

Come, come, let's hurry. Your word, Mara -- pseudonym.

As Mara steps forward, she winces at this word.

MARA

Pseudonym. P -- s -- e-u--  
d-o-n-- I - no no! y - m.

SPELLING MASTER

That is correct!

There is applause and Mara happy, grateful, returns to her seat.

SPELLING MASTER

All right, Kathy... It's up to you.

As Kathy rises, Mara offers the penny back, but Kathy shakes her head and steps forward.

SPELLING MASTER

Apocryphal!

Kathy reacts slightly at this familiar word.

48 MEDIUM CLOSE SHOT THE FAMILY

48

BETTY

Oh what a break! She can't  
miss that!

BUD

(under his  
breath)

Come on, shrimp!

49 AS BEFORE

49

KATHY

(tormented by  
indecision)

Apocryphal. A-p-o-c-r-y --  
(pause)

f-a-l.

She hangs her head and starts off without waiting to be told it wrong. There is a groan and then applause.

SPELLING MASTER

Oh I'm very sorry, Kathy...

That's not right....

(turns to Mara)

And so here --

(goes to her,  
helps her up)

Here is our new champion!

The applause increases, as Mara, smiling breathlessly looks out at the audience with her tear-stained face.

50 CLOSE SHOT KATHY

50

As the applause continues, she stands off-stage, looking toward the stage, not knowing whether to smile or cry. As the CAMERA PULLS BACK, Margaret enters the scene, followed by Jim, Betty and Bud.

MARGARET

(softly)

Kathy...

Kathy turns, looks at the family a moment, then starts to cry and runs into Margaret's arms.

KATHY

I -- I wanted to win, but --  
somehow --

50 CONTINUED:

50

MARGARET

(hugging her)

We know, we know.

KATHY

I hope you're not mad at me  
for losing.

MARGARET

Mad? Oh, angel, you just won  
the biggest kind of a contest  
there is.

KATHY

(looking up,  
thoughtfully)

You know something -- I gave  
that penny away so I wouldn't  
be able to spell... but I still  
could. That luck stuff is no  
good.

JIM

(kneeling down)

No... but the stuff you have is  
pretty good.

He kisses her. Mara runs into the scene, happy and excited.  
She has a ribboned medal pinned on her dress (the card with  
the number has been removed.)

MARA

Hey, Kathy, come on... They  
want to give you a medal too.

Mara puts her arm around Kathy to lead her second place --  
back on stage. Kathy hesitates a moment, then puts her  
arm around Mara and they walk out arm in arm. The family  
watch them go, all misty-eyed with affection and admiration  
for their Shrimpo.

FADE OUT.

THE END