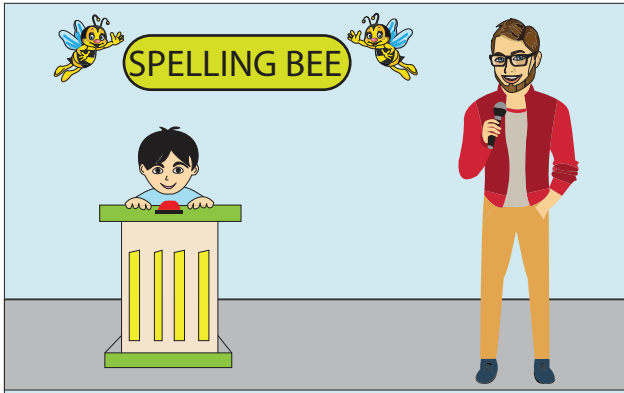


The Spelling Bee



Arlen wiped his sweaty palms on his pants. The buzzer would ring any minute, and it would signify the start of the next round of the school spelling bee. The auditorium was only a third full, but it didn't matter to Arlen. His nerves would be high even if the place were empty.

"How are you doing?" asked Miss Tate. She was the teacher running the school spelling bee. She was also Arlen's seventh grade English teacher.

"I'm fine," Arlen replied.

Miss Tate gave him a smile that let him know she understood he was nervous. "You'll do great. I've been so proud of you in class as we practiced these last few weeks."

"Thanks," Arlen said. Her kind words did not help him feel better, though.

The buzzer rang, and Arlen jumped.

Miss Tate patted his shoulder. "Good luck."

Arlen took his place on stage with the other seventh graders. Arlen was the third student in a line of seven.

The Spelling Bee

Brittanie took a deep breath. "l-r-r-e-s-i-s-t-i-b-l-e."

The judge tapped a green button. This meant she was correct.

The next student was Gary. His word was "oppress."

Gary scratched his head. "O-p-r-e-s-s."

"Arlen winced. He knew Gary had gotten his word wrong even before the judge touched the red button.

Now it was Arlen's turn. He gulped.

"Student number three, your word is "conformable".

Conformable. Arlen took a deep breath and let it out slowly as he considered the spelling of his word.

"C-o-n-f-o-r-m-a-b-l-e."

Would he get it correct?

The judge touched the green button, and Arlen released a rush of air from his lungs. The judge moved on to the next student in line. What a relief! Now he would move on to the next round. His grandmother would be so proud of him.

Before the next round, Arlen walked over to the water fountain to wet his dry throat. Gary sat in a chair with his head hung low.

The Spelling Bee

"Hi Gary," Arlen said.

Gary didn't look up. "Hi," he said.

"I'm sorry you got out on that last round."

Now Gary looked at him. "Thanks. I'm sorry, too. I hope my parents aren't upset with me."

"You did a good job today," Arlen said. "I'm sure they'll understand that."

"Good luck with the next round," Gary said.

"Thank you."

The buzzer rang, and Arlen hurried back to his spot on the stage. He didn't feel so nervous this time. The spelling bee should be fun. Maybe he and Gary could practice together for the next one.

The Spelling Bee

- 1) Arlen was nervous before the spelling competition. Give evidence from the text to prove this.

- 2) How did Arlen feel when the judge touched the green button after he spelled his word?

- 3) Who did Arlen want to make particularly proud?

- 4) How did Arlen reassure Gary?

- 5) How did Arlen feel when the buzzer rang again for the next round?
