5. The Bee Day

Some (student/students) my age like to play sports. (Others/The others) love fashion or computer games. As for (me/myself), spelling bees are my biggest passion. Every day after school, I sit on the front steps of my house (reading/read) (over/through) my old dictionary. My training (pays for/pays off) when I get (that/what) my friends can (hardly/hard) spell.

It's 6:30 (on/in) a Friday morning. As soon as I open my eyes, I feel butterflies in my stomach. To (cheer up/calm) my nerves, I remind (myself/me) of the fact (that/what) I'm one of (the best/best) spellers in my grade. In fact, I'm not (aimming/aiming) to win the national competition. All I want (are/is) to beat my biggest rival, Dan, at the school's spelling bee. His passion for spelling isn't as strong as (mine/me), (but/so) he seems to be a good speller without (putting/put) (many/much) effort into it. Actually, his true interest lies in math and science. I bet he'll be out in the first round, especially if he (will get/gets) a (literary/literal/literate) word like "metamorphosis."

My dad is already making breakfast in the kitchen. I tell him how (worried/nervous) (I am/am I) (while/during) he puts scrambled eggs onto my plate.

"Can you quiz me on some words, Dad?"
"Sure, Olivia. Let's start with a hard one. 'Serendipitous.'"
I make a face. "Well, that's too easy (to/for) me. S-E-R-E-N-D-I-P-I-T-O-U-S."
"Yes, you got it! How about 'narcissism'?"
"Easy. N-A-R-C-I-S-S-I-S-M."
"I'm afraid that's wrong." I put down my fork. "What do you mean it's wrong? N-A-R-C-I-S-S-I-S-M. That's how (it's spelled/it spelled)."
"Sorry, dear. That's not the answer. You can (look up it/look it up) in the dictionary if you want." I hurry to my room and get out my dictionary.

"K...L...M...N!" I (search for/search) the page and find it: narcissism. I close the book and walk back to the kitchen.
"You were right," I say sadly (sliding/slide) back into my chair.
"Oh, cheer up. Now you'll know how to spell it if you (get/will get) it at the bee today."

At school, I spend the whole morning (stare/staring) at the clock. The spelling bee is after lunch and I can't wait. The first class is math, (which/that) is Dan's favorite. Mr. Steven writes an *equation on the board: 2axa=b.

"What's a shorter way to write this?" Mr. Steven asks. Dan raises
his hand right away and Mr. Steven calls on him (to answer/answer). "2a *squared equals b," he says.

"That's right! Olivia, can you explain (why is that/why that is)?"

I take my eyes (on/off) the clock and look at Mr. Steven. "'a' and 'b' are just letters. They're for words. How can you say they equal anything?"

Dan puts (up/out) his hand again and says, "There are lots of letters in math, (either/too)." I give him a nasty look. I'm definitely going to teach him (what letters really are for/what are really letters for) this afternoon.

"(Are/Is) everybody ready?" The bell rings and Ms. Hawking tells everyone (to gather/gather) around. It's time for (that/what) I've been waiting for all day. She reads words from the list (that/what) she's holding in her hands. There are a lot of bad spellers in my class, so they start dropping out of the competition. After three rounds, only four students are left. (Therefore/Finally), by the fifth round, (it's narrowed/it narrowed) down to just me and Dan.

"Olivia, your next word is "studious," says Ms. Hawking. "S-T-U-D-I-O-U-S. Studious," I say confidently. "Excellent! Now, for you, Dan ..., 'tedious.'"


The tension (arises/rises) as we continue going back and forth. My next word is 'algorithm.'

"A math term?" I'm not so sure about it, (and/but) I try anyway.


"I'm sorry, Olivia, but that's not correct. It's 'I' instead of 'Y,'" If Dan (will get.gets) his next word right, he'll be the winner. Dan, your word is 'Narcissism.'" says Ms. Hawking.

I can't believe it! I know that word. It's the word I couldn't spell this morning. I bet Dan won't get it right, (too/either).


My heart drops in (disappointed/disappointment). It's over. He's won.

"Congratulations, Dan! You are the winner," Ms. Hawking announces happily and a huge smile (flash/flashes) across Dan's face.

I start to zigzag back to my seat, and then, I feel a hand on my arm.

"Hey, you did a really good job," says Dan (holds/holding) out his hand to shake (me/mine).

"Algorithm' is an impossible word. I would never have known it if I (haven't/hadn't) read math books all the time."

"Narcissism," I say (weakly/weak).
"Well, that was just (luck/lucky). I saw the word 'narcissism' in a book of Greek Mythology (the other day/someday)."
I'm surprised. "You like Greek Mythology? That's my favorite! I thought you only read math and science books."

"I usually do, but I also enjoy (to read/reading) myths. They're related (to/of) science in some parts."

"I've never thought about that," I say (with/in) a smile.
Dan smiles back. I guess Dan and I have more in common than I thought."