



TEACHERS' RESOURCES

RECOMMENDED FOR

Ages 8 to 12; year 3 to 6

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KEY CURRICULUM AREAS

- **Learning areas:** English
- **General capabilities:** Literacy

REASONS FOR STUDYING THIS BOOK

- A fun and heartwarming novel that explores the key learning outcome of spelling

THEMES

- Spelling
- Competition
- Family
- Friendship and teamwork
- Bullying
- Kindness
- Shyness
- Solving mysteries

PREPARED BY

Deborah Abela and Penguin Random House Australia

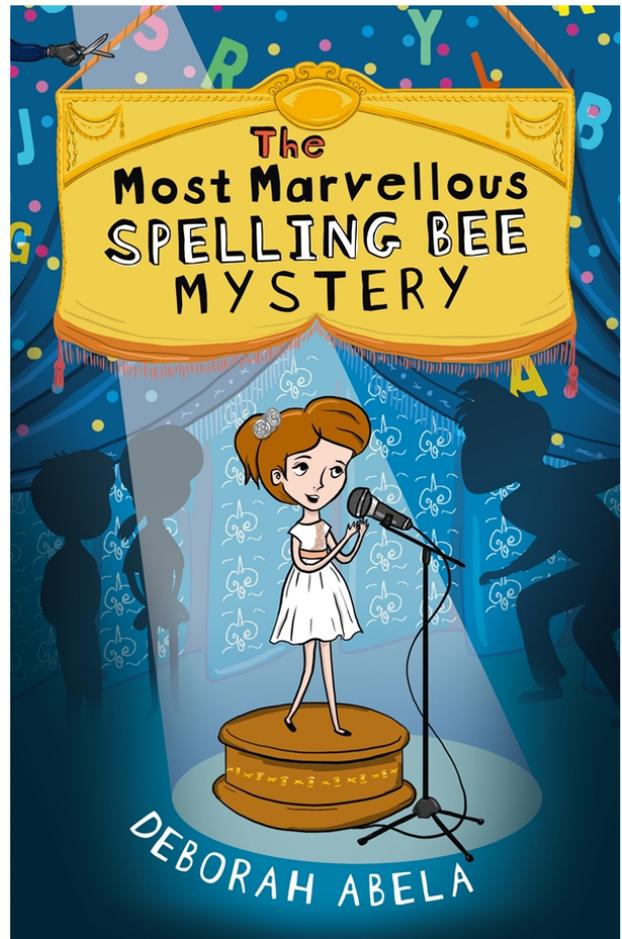
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The Most Marvellous Spelling Bee Mystery Deborah Abela

PLOT SUMMARY

Just when India Wimple's life is returning to normal after competing in the Stupendously Spectacular Spelling Bee, she's invited to London for an international spelling showdown. But how can she go without her family? The Yungabilla community might have a solution!

In London, India is reunited with her friends Rajish and Summer. They meet new spellers, and are invited to Buckingham Palace to meet the Queen.

But there is skulduggery afoot, with a series of mysterious mishaps. There is even talk of cancelling the competition altogether.

India and her friends are determined to find out who the culprit is and get the spelling bee back on track.

There are words to be spelled, nerves to be overcome, and a champion to be found!

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

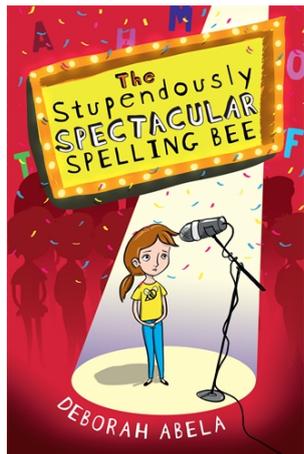
After completing a teaching degree and a BA (Comm), Deborah Abela became the producer/writer of a national kids' TV show before leaving to write over 20 novels, including the *Max Remy Superspy* and the *Jasper Zammit (Soccer Legend)* series. Her 'cranky' novels, *Grimsdon* and *New City*, were driven by her wish that we take better care of the planet, with added sea monsters, flying machines and sword-fighting girls. *Teresa: A New Australian* was inspired by her dad, who, with a million other refugees, sailed to Australia after the devastation of WW2.

Deb has won many awards for her books, including a USA IBBY Outstanding International Book Award and the Maurice Saxby Award for services to Children's Literature. She is an ambassador for Room to Read and Books In Homes.

Visit deborahabela.com for more information about Deb's books.



AUTHOR'S INSPIRATION



The first book of India Wimple's spelling adventures is *The Stupendously Spectacular Spelling Bee*.

Here's Deborah Abela talking about her inspiration for writing about a love of spelling and reading in these books:

When I was in Year 4, my teacher was Miss Gray.

She was young and energetic and we were the first class she'd ever had. Miss Gray made everything fun. She loved words and stories – which, for a bookish kid like me, was perfect.

One of the first things she did was install a spinner in our class – that's a rotating stand where she slotted lots of brand new books. When she announced it was our very own class library, I was in heaven. This is

where I truly remember falling in love with books and where I met one of my favourites, *Professor Branestawm* by Norman Hunter, about a crazy professor whose inventions always backfired or blew up.

Miss Gray seemed to make a game of everything and one of my favourites was our weekly spelling competition. We would clear all the desks from the room and line up along the back wall. The girls would wait on one side and the boys on the other. Two kids would stand at the head of each line while Miss Gray called out a word and counted down from three. The two kids would race to the board and write the word in chalk. Whoever was the first to spell the word correctly earned a point. Both teams were determined to win.

I recently wrote to Miss Gray to tell her she had inspired *The Stupendously Spectacular Spelling Bee*. She has only recently retired from teaching but had been following my career. When I asked if I could send her a copy of the book, she said she'd be delighted. Thank you, Miss Gray, for being one of the best teachers I ever had.

CHARACTERS

Read the following character descriptions.

India Wimple, age 12

India is bookish and quiet and smart but also very, very shy. Her shyness began years ago while performing in a school play and everything went horribly wrong. She's been terribly shy ever since.

India adores her family. This is the most important thing about her. She especially adores her young brother, Boo. Boo was born too early and when the doctors warned the Wimples he may not make it, India sat by his hospital crib, willing him to get better. With his family and sister at his side, Boo grew stronger and was finally allowed to go home, and they have doted on him ever since.

India loves living in the small country town of Yungabilla. She knows it isn't famous for anything, or a holiday destination or even on the way to a holiday, but to her, the town and its people are perfect and she wouldn't want to live anywhere else.

Since winning the Stupendously Spectacular Spelling Bee (in the first book), India has been feeling a little more confident. But when the opportunity comes up to go to London, she feels she can't go without her whole family there to support her. What will the Wimples, and the town of Yungabilla, do to get everyone to London?



Dad

Dad used to be a journalist for the local paper, but the drought has meant times are tough for lots of businesses, including the paper, and he was the one who turned off the lights when it was finally shut down. He's now a handyman. He bought a cheap van with dented panels and an engine that mostly starts, and he painted a sign on the side that says, 'Arnie the Fixer: You Bust It, I Fix It'.

Sometimes people don't have enough money to pay him, so they give him IOUs or pay him in other ways: a live chicken, a freshly baked apple pie, or a handmade pair of bright yellow pants.

He's also clumsy, something that comes from daydreaming about being back at the paper – something that India is determined to fix.

Even though money is tight, Dad is a hopeless optimist and as long as he has his family, he knows everything will be fine.

Mum

Mum used to be a teacher at Yungabilla Primary School. It was a job she loved, but when Boo's asthma became worse, she quit and began teaching Boo from home, saying she needed to be near him *in case*. She never said in case of what, and the rest of the Wimples were happy that she didn't.

Mum and Dad met on a trip to India when they were young. It was love at first sight and, when they had their first baby, they knew exactly what they were going to call her.

Mum never tires of coming up with new stories of *Brave Boo and Ingenious India*, about a very clever girl who always knows how to get out of scrapes and her very brave brother who will scale tall buildings and face down the meanest of bad guys to make her plans happen.

In *The Most Marvellous Spelling Bee Mystery*, the family will need to convince Mum to stop worrying so much about Boo, and let him go to school like a normal kid. Will they succeed?

Nanna Flo

Nanna Flo used to live on her own until she broke her wrist during a particularly enthusiastic yoga move and the Wimples invited her to live with them. She didn't like it at first but soon realised she was much happier surrounded by her family.

She can be stubborn and mouthy and say inappropriate things, which is part of her charm, but Dad does step in sometimes if he thinks she is about to cause trouble. In *The Most Marvellous Spelling Bee Mystery*, it's Nanna Flo who has the courage to berate a

very rude pair of parents who are making everyone uncomfortable with their tactlessness!

Boo Wimple, age 7

Boo Wimple is India's younger brother. He's lively and funny and smart.

He and India often snuggle up at night when he finds it hard to sleep and she tells him stories of when he was a baby and almost didn't make it home from hospital. In truth, he will never be as adventurous as Brave Boo because of his asthma. It can sneak up on an otherwise perfectly fine day and wrench his body so that he has to be rushed to hospital and hooked up on machines that whir and beep while his family hover over him trying not to look as scared as they are.

In *The Most Marvellous Spelling Bee Mystery*, Boo has decided it's time for him to go to normal school – but will he be able to convince his mum to stop worrying about him?

Summer Millicent Ernestine Beauregard-Champion

Summer is rich. And she likes it that way. Her parents are high-flying types who Summer rarely sees but, when she does, they bring her presents. In the first book, Summer was India's rival in the Bee and she wanted to win at all costs.

Now the two girls are friends – though India and Rajish need to remind Summer sometimes to think of other people and not just herself!

Summer's brash manner and resourcefulness will come in handy when the friends need to find out who is behind the accidents at the Spelling Bee – and get the culprit to confess.

Rajish Kapoor

Rajish Kapoor has thick dark hair, an infectious smile and a dad who was so determined he'd win the first spelling bee, he followed him around with a giant book of words, making him practise. When Rajish meets India in the first book, he instantly likes her and it's through their friendship that India begins to overcome her shyness and learn that making friends can be easy – it just takes the right person. India is excited to be reunited in London with Rajish and their friendship finds new purpose in helping to uncover the skulduggery behind the International Bee.

Holly Trifle

It isn't that Holly Trifle doesn't like her family. It's just that sometimes she wonders if they're her real family, since they don't seem to have anything in common. Holly's mum and dad and older sister and brother are fitness-obsessed, and spend all their time on their



business, *Beaut Butts and Guts*. They only agree to let Holly go to London from Canada for the Bee, for the possible prize money and the chance to expand their fitness empire to a new country. And they quickly embarrass Holly with their rudeness as they try to convince the other contestants and parents that their butts and guts need work.

Holly will need to find the confidence to stand up for herself. She's delighted to make friends with India, Rajish, Summer and Peter at the Spelling Bee, and they help Holly to make herself heard.

Peter Eriksson

Peter is bullied at school, and although his mum and grandfather love him very much, he feels sad that he doesn't know his dad – who left when he was a baby. Peter is also delighted to make friends with India, Rajish, Summer and Holly and find that not everyone is a bully. Although his dream is that his dad will see him on TV becoming a spelling champion and want to get to know his son, Peter will realise that it's the people who love him who are important.

THEMES

Self-confidence

Discussion questions

- Each character deals with nervousness, anxiety and worry in their own way – India is shy and doesn't like performing in front of others; Rajish faces pressure from his dad; Holly is used to being ignored, and Peter has been affected by bullying so that he has lost his sense of self-esteem. What does each character do to overcome their shyness, nerves or lack of confidence? What do their friends do to help and support them?
- Has there been a time in your life when you felt really shy? Has being nervous ever stopped you doing anything you wanted to do? How did it feel? What helped you feel less nervous? What tips would you give the spellers at the Most Marvellous International Spelling Bee?

Family

Discussion questions

- Why does India refuse to go to London without her family? What do they mean to her?
- Look at the families portrayed in the story, and discuss ways each family could communicate better or understand each other better. In what ways do different family members change over the course of the story, for better or worse? Some examples you could talk about include:

- India's mum has to learn to stop worrying about Boo so much.
- Holly's dad realises he's been ignoring his clever, interesting daughter, and intends to spend more time with her, cheering her on.
- Peter's grandfather realises his grief has made him close himself off from his daughter and grandson, and he resolves to spend more time with Peter.
- The Wimble family are very close. Find three examples in the novel where the author has shown this either in what they say or do.

Bullying

Some of the characters in the novel experience bullying by both adults and other kids. One person who is bullied is Peter Eriksson, who has been picked on since his first day at school by another student called Bruiser. When we first meet Peter, he has been bullied again, this time because he doesn't have a dad.

That day, after school, Peter had been bullied.

Again.

Bruiser had slammed him against the brick wall of the toilet block. There'd been an icy chill to the day, which made the bricks feel even harder and sharper, and Peter knew they'd leave another bruise he'd have to hide from his mum.

The playground was empty and a cold wind blew across the yard, kicking up lunch wrappers. There was something about the way they swirled against the cloud-filled sky that made Peter wish he was a scrap of paper too, so he could float away, light and free. (Chapter 4)

Peter doesn't stand up for himself with Bruiser, but later, when he meets the adult bully of Harrington Hathoway the Third, he does (Chapter 21).

Discussion questions

- Discuss what you think led Peter to finally stand up to a bully?
- Do you think this would have been easy for Peter?
- What effect did knowing his new friends were nearby have on him?
- Why did Harrington act in the way he did when Peter stood up to him?
- Rewrite the confrontation scene in Chapter 21 from one of the other characters' points of view. As well as describing what happened, you might want to include what they were thinking and feeling and what they did to support Peter.



CREATIVE WRITING

Newspaper articles

India loves stories. She loves to read them and to listen to Mum's stories about Brave Boo and Ingenious India, but she especially loves Dad's news articles, which have everything India wants in a story: *vivid details, clever twists and interesting characters with big hearts, and it kept her fascinated till the very end.* (p. 55)

At the end of the novel, Dad writes an article about the accidents at the bee. Discuss the main parts of that story Dad may have included, how he may have started the article to grab the readers' attention and the techniques he could have used to make the story exciting. Write your own news article about the skulduggery at the bee that is engaging. Make sure your first line grabs your readers and each paragraph builds excitement until the very end.

Making trouble

An author's main job when writing a story is to make lots of trouble for their characters. Stories are full of problems and authors need to constantly decide which trouble is going to be the most exciting.

Read the following extract from Chapter 9 of *The Most Marvellous Spelling Bee Mystery*. The families of all the spelling bee competitors have gathered at the hotel to meet each other, when something goes terribly wrong:

High above them, the rope from the canvas Spelling bee banner had frayed after more than 50 years of swaying from the ceiling of the Royal Windsor Hotel. And now those frayed strands were beginning to weaken. One by one they snapped, and the banner began to sag.

But no-one noticed. Not yet.

The weight of the sagging banner meant the strands broke even faster, until the last few finally gave way. The banner crumpled like a torn parachute and rippled towards the ground.

A handful of guests and staff looked up. Some called out. Most dived to get out of the way. Except for ...

Activity

- Discuss as a class or in groups what could happen next to make the story exciting. Make a list on the board and talk about what would be most exciting and why, keeping in mind that it must keep the story moving forward. Choose the trouble you like best and write what happens next.

Creating tension

Stories not only build from beginning to the end but the tension can also build within each chapter.

Here's a scene from Chapter 3 of Holly asking her parents if she can go to London for the Most Marvellous International Spelling Bee:

Even though Holly had lived with her family for eleven years, four months and three days, this wasn't quite the reaction she was hoping for, but what Mrs Trifle said next was something she was absolutely not expecting.

'You're not going.'

'What?' Holly momentarily lost her breath. *'I have to go. The top spellers from around the world have been invited.'*

'Well, they'll be there without you.'

Activities

- What do you know about Holly and her parents so far?
- How do you think the author wants you to feel at this point in the story?
- What problems does Holly have to overcome to get her parents to agree? How does she convince her parents to let her go?
- Can you come up with five reasons Holly could give her parents to help convince them she should go to the Bee?
- Write a diary entry from Holly about how she felt during and after this conversation.

Building setting

Yungabilla is the small country town where the Wimple Family live. Read the descriptions of Yungabilla and its citizens (including Bessie the lamington-loving cow!) in Chapter 1.

When Deb creates a setting in her books, she likes to imagine it as if she has been there, so it will come to life when she writes about it. She based Yungabilla on a small country town in Victoria called Hopetoun, where her in-laws live. She loves how Hopetoun is always so friendly and everyone helps each other out when they need it. They've also been really badly affected by drought. People gather for public events like nights by the lake or the Hopetoun Show, which does make them feel better.

Activities

- Draw a map of how you think Yungabilla might look, including the shops we know about, like Gracie's Cafe, Mrs O'Donnell's Bakery and the Yungabilla Primary School, and other buildings and sites you might find in a small country town. For example, you could add the lake and the nearby bike track. Think about activities nearby like fishing



or yabbing. Are there any caves to explore or forests to hike through?

- Create a blog post, travel brochure or webpage about Yungabilla and why it would be a perfect holiday destination. Make sure to mention all the things you think would be exciting about going to Yungabilla. You can make up as many activities as you like.
- Imagine the Queen comes to visit Yungabilla after India tells her about her town. How would she see it? Write a story about the Queen's visit.
- London is another vivid setting in the book. Research London's landmarks and top tourist sites. What would you like to see if you visited London?

Playing with words

One of the main reasons Deb wrote this novel is because she loves words and especially loved the spelling competitions she used to have in Year 4 with her teacher Miss Gray.

Activity

- Each chapter starts with a word that captures its theme. Choose five of those words below and write a sentence using that word.

triumphant	determined	sabotage
disheartened	serendipity	culprit
avaricious	oblivious	revelation
namby-pamby	fortune	nemesis
conundrum	gumption	dudgeon
preparation	epiphany	exonerated
monumental	debonair	grand final
nonchalant	predicament	au revoir
unforeseen	tenterhooks	

- Many of the words above describe classic story elements. Use some of those words to create your own story plot. What is the *conundrum* your character will face? Who or what will *sabotage* their plans? Who is the *culprit* of a crime? Who is your character's *nemesis*? How will your character fix the situation and become *triumphant*?

Examining a scene

One of the best ways to learn how to write is to look at your favourite books and examine why you love them.

Activity

- Write a paragraph about your favourite scene in the novel and why. It could be for the action, the humour or because you found it moving. Include what it is about the scene that appeals to you.

SPELLING FUN

Run your own spelling bee

This can be done over a whole term and involve your class or your whole school.

To prepare:

- Create a name for your competition, and design a logo that could appear on banners, microphones, podiums and scoreboard. For example: 'World's Greatest Spelling Bee', or 'Spell-o-rama' or 'Spelling Legends'. Give each entrant a card to wear around their neck with their name.
- Nominate someone to be the scorekeeper and timekeeper.
- Establish your rules. How many words can you misspell before you are out of the competition? How long do you have to spell a word? How many people will go through each round? How many rounds will there be? Will you involve just your class or the whole school? Will the children be given the list of words beforehand?

Commonly misspelled words

Below is a list of fifty words that are often misspelled. Study the list carefully and, like India, practise spelling them every chance you can. In your class, form small teams and see which group can spell most of the words correctly. (Note that some words will be spelled differently depending on the way they're used or their meaning, such as principal/principle, or licence/license.)

embarrass	accessory	accommodation
guarantee	opportunity	eighth
receipt	February	acceptable
amateur	conscientious	believe
exhilarate	fiery	grateful
liaison	maintenance	mischievous
noticeable	principal	questionnaire
rhyme	rhythm	sergeant
disappearance	environment	exaggerate
forty	government	irresistible
knowledge	laboratory	harass
villain	weird	excellence
fascination	license	marriage
necessary	occurred	official
neighbour	particularly	peculiar
parallel	psychology	restaurant
temperature	persuade	



SPELLING RESOURCES

Australian spelling bees

- For NSW:
<https://www.artsunit.nsw.edu.au/speaking-competitions/spelling-bee/premiers-spelling-bee>
- For all Australian school children:
<http://www.spellmasters.com.au/>

More fun and games with spelling

There are loads of websites with great spelling activities. Here are a few:

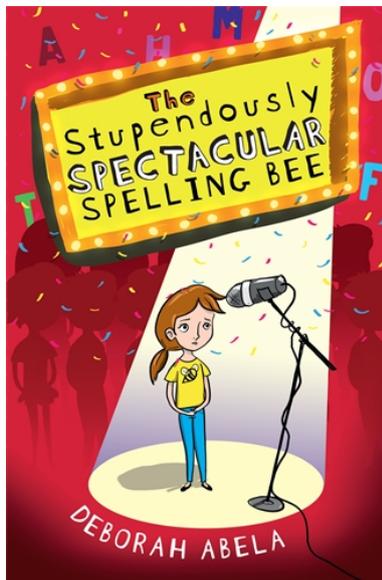
- <http://www.superteacherideas.com/spelling.html>
- http://www.educationworld.com/a_lesson/03/lp314-01.shtml
- <https://au.pinterest.com/rhymetime/spelling-activities/>
- <http://www.popsugar.com/moms/10-Ways-Make-Spelling-Practice-Fun-2733262>
- <http://www.kidspell.com/>

Online spelling games

- <http://pbskids.org/superwhy/#/game/spellingbee>
- <http://www.spellingcity.com/> This website allows kids to enter their spelling list and creates an online game to test if they can spell them all correctly.
- <http://www.knowledgeadventure.com/subject/spelling-games/> This website has loads of links to spelling games.



FURTHER READING FROM PENGUIN RANDOM HOUSE AUSTRALIA



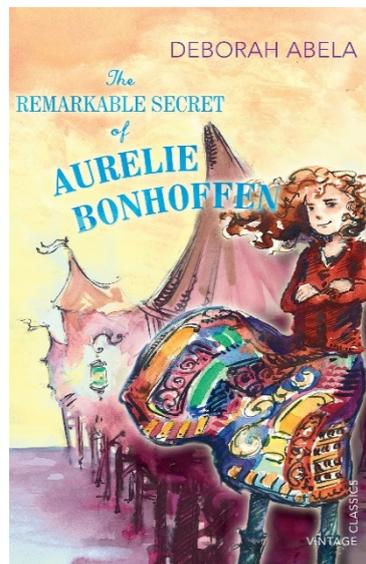
The Stupendously Spectacular Spelling Bee
by Deborah Abela

India Wimple can spell. Brilliantly. Every Friday night, she and her family watch the Stupendously Spectacular Spelling Bee. When the Wimples suggest she enter the next Bee, India says she's not good enough – but her family won't hear it and encourage her to sign up.

There are plenty of obstacles to reaching the finals: something in India's past has made her terribly shy, and moving on to each round involves finding the money to make it happen.

And finally, there's Summer Millicent Ernestine Beauregard-Champion, a spoilt rich girl who is determined to win – and isn't afraid to step on anyone who gets in her way.

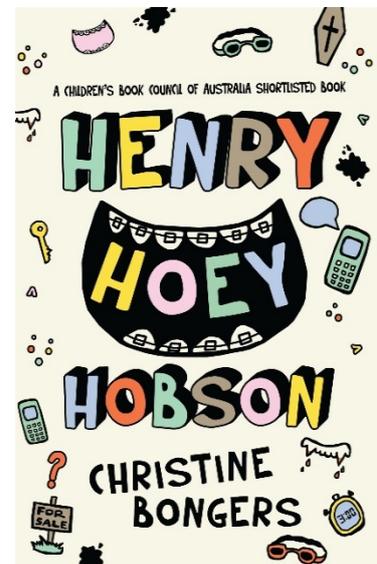
[Teachers' resources available.](#)



The Remarkable Secret of Aurelie Bonhoffen
by Deborah Abela

Ever since Aurelie Bonhoffen was a child, she has juggled, played the dead girl on the ghost train and the back end of the cow in the marquee of Bonhoffen's Seaside Pier. She adores her family – especially her uncles Rolo and Rindolf – but on her twelfth birthday, she stumbles on her family's remarkable secret. It's hard to accept at first, but when her new friend at school reveals a dangerous plot against the pier, the secret helps Aurelie confront the greatest threat her family has ever faced.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)



Henry Hoey Hobson
by Christine Bongers

Henry Hoey Hobson arrives at his sixth school, Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, to discover he's the only boy in Year Seven.

Friendless, fatherless and non-Catholic, Henry is not only a Perpetual Sucker, but a bloodsucker, according to his catty classmates.

When he's caught moving a coffin into the creepy house next door, it drives a stake through the heart of his hopes of fitting in.

His only chance to fight back is the school swimming carnival – sink-or-swim time in the treacherous waters of Year Seven.

[Teachers' resources available.](#)

CREATIVE WRITING WORKSHEET: Story mountains

Stories are like climbing mountains . . . they start describing characters who then face various problems they struggle to solve, until they reach a climax and slide down towards a resolution.

Look at the story mountain below. Choose one of the characters in *The Most Marvellous Spelling Bee Mystery* – perhaps India, Holly or Peter. Can you plot the points in the story where that character changes because of his or her decisions?



Describe _____ at the start of the novel. What do we know about them and their life?

What is the first moment of change that pushes _____ toward competing in the spelling bee?



What struggles and roadblocks happen along the way?

On the story mountain, the highest point is the hardest part of the story, where it seems like the characters will never meet their goals. What is the hardest point for _____? How does _____ overcome this?

Do you think _____ is the same person at the end of the story as he or she was at the beginning? How do you think he or she has changed?



ORDER FORM

TITLE	AUTHOR	ISBN	SCHOOL YEAR	RRP	QUANTITY	TOTAL
The Most Marvellous International Spelling Bee	Deborah Abela	9780143786689	3-6	\$14.99		
The Stupendously Spectacular Spelling Bee	Deborah Abela	9781925324822	3-6	\$14.99		
The Remarkable Secret of Aurelie Bonhoffen	Deborah Abela	9781742757438	3-6	\$19.99		
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