

How Do You Spell Famous?

Judy Moody marched into third grade on a plain old Thursday, in a plain old ordinary mood. That was *before* Judy got stung by the Queen Bee.

Judy sat down at her desk, in the front row next to Frank Pearl.

“Hey, did you see Jessica Finch?” asked Frank in a low voice.

“Yeah, so? I see her every day. She sits catty-cornered behind me.”

“She’s wearing a crown.”

Judy turned to look at Jessica, then whispered to Frank, “Where’d she get that? Burger Barn?”

“I don’t know,” said Frank. “Ask her. She says it’s bejeweled.”

“Well, it looks be-dumb, if you ask me,” said Judy, though secretly she admired the sparkling ruby-like gems.

“Hey, are those real rubies?” Judy asked Jessica.

“They’re costume jewelry,” Jessica said.

“Who are you dressing up as? The Queen of England?”

“No, I’m the Queen Bee,” said Jessica. “I won the N. V. Spelling Bee on Saturday.”

“The envy spelling bee?” Judy asked.



Judy didn't envy anybody who had to spell long words into a microphone with a million and one people staring bug-eyed at her. She knew those people were silently yelling *FLUB IT UP* because they wanted their own kid to win.

"Not *envy*. N. V. As in Northern Virginia."

"Oh," said Judy. "Is that where you got the crown?"

"It's a tiara," said Jessica. "T-I-A-R-A. A tiara is a fancy crown like the Queen of England wears. Queen of the Bee has to know tons of definitions."

"What word did you win for?" Judy asked. "Frank wants to know," she added, in case Jessica thought *she* was interested.

“Artichoke. It’s a fourth-grade word.”

Artichoke! Judy could barely spell meat-loaf! Give me S-C-I-E-N-C-E any day, she thought. Was that the rule? I before E? Or was it E before I?

“I have spelling posters in my room at home,” said Jessica. “With all the rules. I even have a glow-in-the dark one.”

“That would give me spelling nightmares. I’ll take my glow-in-the-dark skeleton poster any day. It shows all two hundred and six bones in the body!”

“Judy,” said Mr. Todd. “The back of your head is not nearly as interesting as the front. And so far I’ve seen more of it today than I’d like.”

“Sorry,” said Judy, facing front again.

Jessica tapped Judy and passed her a folded page from the newspaper. Right there, SMACK-DAB in the MIDDLE of the newspaper for the whole world to see, was a picture of Jessica Finch. It even said LOCAL GIRL BECOMES QUEEN BEE in big fat headline letters.

“My dad says I got my fifteen minutes of fame,” Jessica whispered to the back of Judy’s head.



Judy did not turn around. She was green with N-V. Jessica A. Finch, Queen of the Dictionary, Class 3T, was famous! Judy could not help thinking how

stupendous it would feel to be able to spell better than *meatloaf* and be the Queen Bee and wear a tiara. To get her own picture in the paper!

But she, Judy Moody, felt about as famous as a pencil.



As soon as Judy got home from school, she decided to memorize the dictionary. But she got stuck on *aardwolf*. Three lousy words. Who ever heard of an *aardwolf* anyway? Silly old termite-eater. It had a pointy little head and beady little eyes and a pinched-up face that looked just like . . . Jessica A. Finch! Jessica *Aardwolf* Finch might be famous, but she was also a silly old termite-eater.

Since Jessica had become Queen Bee with the word *artichoke*, Judy decided to skip the dictionary and spell all the vegetables in the refrigerator instead.

“Do we have any artichokes?” Judy asked her mother, opening the door of the fridge.

“Since when did you start liking artichokes?” asked Mom.

“Don’t worry, I’m not going to eat them or anything,” said Judy. “It’s for Spelling.”

“Spelling?” Stink asked.

“Mr. Todd does have some creative ways of teaching Spelling,” said Mom.

“Never mind,” said Judy, giving up when she saw asparagus. Vegetables were too



hard to spell. There had to be a food group that was easier.

At dinner Judy slurped up a noodle and asked, “How do you spell *spaghetti*?”

“N-O-O-D-L-E,” said Stink.

“S-P-A-G-H-E-T-T-I,” said Dad.

“Or P-A-S-T-A,” said Mom.

“Never mind,” said Judy. “Please pass the B-R-E-A-D.”

“How was school today?” Mom asked.

“W-E-L-L,” Judy said. “Jessica Finch won a T-I-A-R-A in a spelling bee and got her picture in the P-A-P-E-R. Even if she does look like an A-A-R-D-W-O-L-F, aardwolf.”

“So that’s what all this spelling is about,” said Mom.

“You’re W-E-I-R-D,” Stink told his sister.

"*I* comes before *E*, Stink. Except after *C*. Everybody knows *that*." What a meat-loaf.

"Actually," said Mom, "your brother's right."

"WHAT?" said Judy. "How can he be right? He broke the rule!"

"Lots of rules have exceptions," said Dad. "Times when you have to break the rule."

"No fair!" Judy slumped down in her chair. She was not going to become famous by spelling, that was for sure. The three strings of spaghetti left on her plate made the shape of a mean face. Judy made a mean face back.

Dad took a bite out of his garlic bread

and asked Judy, “You’re not in one of your famous moods again, are you?”



The Moody Hall of Fame

The next day at breakfast, Judy ate her corn flakes without even spelling them.

There had to be lots of ways people got famous besides spelling.

While she munched, Judy watched her little brother, Stink, hang stuff up on the refrigerator: his report card, the self-portrait that made him look like a monkey, and a photo of himself in his flag costume, from the time he went to Washington, D. C.,

MOODY HALL OF FAME



without her. Above everything, he had spelled MOODY HALL OF FAME with letter magnets.

“Hey!” she said. “Where’s me?”

“I made it,” said Stink.

“Why not leave Judy some room, honey,” said Mom. “She can hang things there too.”

Judy ran back up the stairs, two by two. She searched her desk for things to put in the Moody Hall of Fame. But all she could find were crumpled-up papers, acorn hats, a year-old candy heart that said HOT STUFF, and a drawer full of pink dust from all the times she had erased her spelling words and brushed them into her top drawer.

She rummaged through her closet next. All she had there were her collections: Band-Aids, fancy toothpicks, body parts (from dolls!), Bazooka Joe comics, pizza tables. Forget it. A person could not be in a hall of fame for toothpicks and Band-Aids.

Then Judy remembered her scrapbox. Most kids, like Stink, had a scrapbook. What Judy had was a shoebox that smelled like old rubber. She stood on a chair and lifted the box down from the top shelf.

A lock of baby hair! A tooth she lost in first grade. Mom and Dad would never let her hang dead hair up on the fridge. And nobody wanted to see an old yellow tooth every time they opened the refrigerator. Judy came across a macaroni picture of

herself in kindergarten, with a screaming O for a mouth. She put it back. Stink would just love the chance to call her a noodle head. And remind her that she had a big mouth.

Where were her report cards? There had to be some good ones. Certificates? Blue ribbons? She must have won something, sometime. But all she found were baby footprints, half-melted birthday candles, and dopey drawings of people with four eyes that she'd scribbled in preschool.

What about pictures of herself?

Pictures! Judy flipped through some old photos in an envelope. She had to find something as good as the picture of Stink the time he met the president. Here she



was with Santa Claus. But Santa looked like he was snoring. And there she was standing next to Abraham Lincoln (cardboard). No way could she be in the Moody Hall of Fame for having her picture taken with a cardboard president.

Then there was the one where she was facedown on the neighbor's driveway, throwing a tantrum, because she did NOT want to get her picture taken.

It was no use. Judy could not think of a single thing famous enough for the Moody Hall of Fame.

Judy went back down to the kitchen. The letter magnets on the fridge should have said THE STINK HALL OF FAME.

“So? Where’s your stuff?” Stink asked.

“Did you leave it upstairs or something?”

“Or something,” said Judy. She hadn’t even found the crummy old ribbon from the time she won the Viola Swamp Look-Alike Contest in first grade.

“Mom?” Judy asked. “Did you ever get your picture in the paper?”

“Sure,” said Mom. “Lots of times. For the high school glee club.”

“What’s *glee*?” asked Stink.

“*Glee* means being happy,” Mom told him, “or cheerful.”

“They put your picture in the paper just for being happy?” asked Judy.

“No.” Mom laughed. “Glee club is a singing group.” Judy did not think anybody would take *her* picture just for being happy.

Or for singing songs about it.

“How about you, Dad?” asked Judy.

“They said my name on the radio once for having the right answer to a quiz-show question.”

“What was the question?” asked Stink.

“How many presidents were born in Virginia?”

“How many?” asked Stink and Judy.

“Eight.”

“Wow,” said Judy.

“Aren’t you going to ask me?” asked Stink.

“You never had your picture in the paper,” said Judy.

“Yes, I did, didn’t I, Mom?” Stink asked.

“It’s in my baby scrapbook.”

“You’ve heard that story, Judy, about how we waited too long to leave for the hospital and your brother was born in the back of the Jeep.”

“I was even on TV! On the news!”

“Oh, yeah,” said Judy. “Thanks for reminding me.”

It wasn’t fair. Her own stinky brother got to be on the real live news. She, Judy Moody, was not even famous enough for the refrigerator.

