



Spellbound

Film Study Guide

Director: Jeffrey Blitz

2002 | Documentary | 97 Minutes | US | English | Rated G

Synopsis: *Spellbound* follows eight kids on their quest to win the 1999 National Spelling Bee. This Oscar-nominated entry documents the intense experience of the National Spelling Bee as seen through the eyes of eight young spellers, with viewers glimpsing the kids' private lives as they train for and compete in the ultimate cerebral showdown. While they try to keep their eyes on the \$10,000 prize, their personal stories illuminate their quirks, their obsessive study habits and their alternately heartbreaking and inspiring family dynamics.

Post-Screening Discussion Questions

1. Why is the title of this movie significant?
2. What kind of picture of America does this documentary paint in terms of race and class?
3. Do you think the parents of the contestants are supportive? Do they put too much pressure on their children to succeed? Do parents put the same type of pressure on children in your society?
4. Is *Spellbound* a celebration of American values and/or the American Dream? Why or why not? Which families support this theory/feeling and how do they convey this?

5. Why do you feel that 1st or 2nd generation immigrant children succeed in the spelling competition?
6. What motivates these kids to compete in the spelling bee? Do you think some of the parents are living out their dreams through their children's participation in the national spelling bee? Do your parents put pressure on you to succeed or as parents do you put pressure on your children?
7. How is this documentary effective in portraying the pressure of competitions?
8. Which of the contestants do you feel the most connection to or like the most? Why?