

She stops. Welch scrutinizes her.

MR. WELCH (CONT'D)
Are you signed up for the school
spelling bee today?

AKEELAH
No.

Embarrassed, Welch glances back at Larabee, who looks a little annoyed by this diversion.

MR. WELCH
Come to my office.

Akeelah stands before Welch's desk. Behind her, Larabee scrutinizes some class pictures on the wall. Welch is looking over Akeelah's file.

MR. WELCH
Well... Ms. Cross tells me you've
never missed a word on your spelling
tests. But your attendance record
leaves a little to be desired.
(studies her)
You're only eleven? Did you skip a
grade?

AKEELAH
(reluctantly)
... the second.

She curiously glances back at Larabee, who takes a seat and seems bored with the whole affair.

MR. WELCH
Akeelah -- have you ever heard of the
Scripps National Spelling Bee? *

AKEELAH
(takes notice)
Uh... think it was on TV last week. *

MR. WELCH
ESPN shows it every year. Middle-
schoolers from all over the country
compete in school, district, and
regional spelling bees trying to make
it to the National Bee.
(MORE)