

# The Spelling Bee

by Elizabeth Trach

Thursday was the day of the class spelling bee, and Maria had studied all week long to make sure she was ready. Maria was a very good speller. She wanted to win the spelling bee so she could represent her class in the school-wide spelling bee at the end of the month.

When Maria woke up, she felt very cold. She sneezed six times when she got dressed. At breakfast, she didn't feel like eating her toast.

"What's wrong?" asked her father. "Are you nervous about the spelling bee?"

"I don't feel good," answered Maria.

Papi put his hand on Maria's forehead. "You have a fever," he said. "I'm sorry, but you must stay home from school today."

Maria was very sad. Now all her hard work would be wasted, and she would not get to win the spelling bee. She wouldn't even get to try! Maria went back to bed and closed her eyes.

When she opened them again, her room was much brighter. She must have fallen asleep. Maria went to the living room.

"Abuelita! What are you doing here?"

Maria's grandmother gave her a hug. "I came over to make you feel better since you couldn't go to school today. Are you hungry? It's already lunch time."

Abuelita didn't wait for Maria to answer. She went over to the stove in the kitchen and stirred a big pot.

Maria sat down at the kitchen table, and Abuelita brought her a bowl of soup. "This is a special soup, just for you," she said.

Maria looked into the bowl. It was full of steaming broth and chicken. "Where are the noodles?" she asked.

"Look harder," Abuelita said.

Maria used her spoon to scoop up a small bit of the delicious-smelling soup. On her spoon she saw the letters A, R, S and T.

"It's alphabet soup!" she cried.

Abuelita smiled. "I thought we could have our own spelling bee here in the kitchen. Can you make any words with that spoonful?"

Maria looked back at her spoon. "Yes! A-R-T spells art. R-A-T spells rat. T-A-R spells tar. And I can use the S at the end of them to make more than one."

Abuelita smiled. "I see a word, too. S-T-A-R spells star. You are my little spelling star."

Maria smiled, too. This was going to be a wonderful day after all.

**Questions**

1. What is Maria sad about staying home from school?
  
2. What kind of person is Maria's grandmother?
  
3. What does Abuelita make for Maria?
  
4. What three additional words could Maria spell if she also had the letter E on her spoon?