

IT MAKES SCENTS

“Attention, please. I’d like all of the third-grade classes to report to the auditorium at once,” said the voice of the principal on the classroom PA system.

“Why do we have to go?” Brooke Newsom asked her teacher. It was the 17,203rd question Brooke had asked that day.

“I believe it’s time for the school Smelling Bee,” Mrs. Gittleman told her. “C’mon everyone, line up right now.”

MAPLE STREET ELEMENTARY SCHOOL



“*Smelling Bee?*” Brooke asked with a laugh.
“You must mean *Spelling Bee.*”

“No, *Smelling,*” her teacher told her.
“S-M-E-L-L-I-N-G.”

“I know how to smell spelling,” the girl said. “I mean, spell smelling.”

“I’m proud of you,” Mrs. Gittleman told her.
“Now, let’s go.”

When the class reached the auditorium, they saw the big banner onstage.

“It is a Smelling Bee!” Brooke said.

“Welcome, everyone, welcome!” said Principal Gittleman, who was no relation to Brooke’s teacher. (There were, in fact, seven people with the last name Gittleman working at the school; one principal, four teachers, the janitor, and the lunch lady—whose *first name* was Gittleman. It was a total coincidence, though, and none of them were related to each other.)

“Today, we are here to find out which student is the best smeller at Maple Street Elementary School. Smelling is important. After all, it is one of the five senses. Can anyone here name the other four?”

Michael Sykes, sitting in the front row, raised his hand. After Principal Gittleman called on him, he said, “The senses already have names.”

Principal Gittleman smiled. “Yes, they do, Michael. Can you tell me what they are?”

“Taste, touch, hearing, and sight,” he said.
“And sometimes, Y.”

“The senses are right,” the principal told him.
“But Y is a sometimes *vowel*.”

“Oh, yeah,” Michael said. “Do I win anyway?”

Principal Gittleman told him that she was sorry, but there was no prize for naming the senses. Then she told everyone how the competition worked:

“Two children from each class will be selected—at random—to come up and compete. You will each be blindfolded, and you will have to identify many different scents. Get one right, and you stay in for another round. But if you’re wrong, you’re out. The last contestant left wins the competition.”

Principal Gittleman then showed off the trophy: a giant nose with the word MAPLE engraved on it.

Everyone *oohed*. A few people *aahed*.

“Mrs. Gittleman,” Brooke asked her teacher. “Could you please pick me at random?”

“I’m sorry, dear,” Mrs. Gittleman told her. “If I picked you, it wouldn’t be at random.”

Principal Gittleman then called up ten students—two from each class—by choosing a name at random from each of the five third-grade classroom lists.

When Jeffrey Fisher and Grace Williams were called to the stage to represent Brooke's class, Brooke pouted.

The ten students in the competition were each blindfolded, and then they took turns identifying various objects based on their smells.

Teddy Phillips correctly identified the scent of baby powder.

Amanda Gleason immediately knew the smell of shampoo.

Then Tiffany Douglas sniffed a sandwich that Mrs. Gittleman (the lunch lady) held up to her nose.

"Tuna from the cafeteria," Tiffany guessed. But she was wrong. It was meatloaf.

"Oh, yeah," Tiffany said. "It smelled just like tuna, so I should have known it was our school's meatloaf."

Mrs. Gittleman the lunch lady grunted. But Tiffany was out.

The competition continued until Marcus Jensen was stumped after taking a whiff of garlic (he guessed sweat socks), and Sara Day correctly identified the smell of a ripe banana.

“You, my dear, are the winner of the Maple Street Elementary School Smelling Bee!” Principal Gittleman told the girl. “You get the giant Maple Nose!”

Everyone cheered for Sara Day, especially after Principal Gittleman named it Sara Day. Everyone, that is, other than Brooke.

The other contestants left the stage quietly, except for Billy Rowe, who’d somehow forgotten to take off his blindfold and tumbled down the stairs.

With that, the assembly was over. The students and teachers all returned to their

classrooms, and for the rest of the afternoon, Brooke concentrated on one task. No, not smelling things; she was already good at that.

Rather, she practiced being selected at random.

“I’ll get picked for the next Smelling Bee,” she vowed. “Or my name isn’t Brooke Gittleman!”

THE END