



Written by [Mary McHugh](#) on June 7, 2010

## Anamika Veeramani Spells “Stromuhr” to Win National Spelling Bee

A 14-year-old 8th grader from Ohio was the third Indian-American child in a row to win the prestigious Scripps National Spelling Bee. Once an event of humble classrooms and schools from the prairies to the shores, the fun and challenging spelling bee is now a U.S. national competition with this year’s coverage starting on ESPN last Thursday for the preliminaries, and ending with the finals in prime time Friday night on ABC.



Anamika Veeramani bested 273 other contestants when she correctly spelled “stromuhr” — meaning an instrument for measuring the speed of flowing blood. Last year she came in fifth. Vanya Shivashankar, the sister of 2009 winner Kavys Shivashankar, was also there competing. At age eight, she was the youngest participant this year.

Among the prizes won by Anamika was a scholarship of \$5,000 from the Sigma Phi Epsilon Educational Foundation, a monetary reward of \$30,000, a \$2,500 savings bond, and of course, the grand trophy from E.W. Scripps Co. She hopes to eventually become a cardiovascular surgeon.

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In its section called “Get to Know the Competition,” the National Spelling Bee website listed some points of interest, of which were the following:

6. The pronouncer, Dr. Jacques A. Bailly, is fluent in French and German, and he teaches ancient Greek and Latin.
7. English is not the first language of 21 spellers, and 102 spellers speak languages other than English.
8. The spellers’ favorite words include schadenfreude, pfeffermuss and onomatopoeia.

In this day of calculators in the classrooms, look-say reading, the absence of phonics, children sitting in front of TVs, computers, and video screens for hours a day, and a growing aversion to straightforward reading — indeed the entire scope of the dumbing down of America which continues apace — it is encouraging and refreshing to see this event and these hardworking children. Once competing on this level, it takes more than just dealing with spelling as a subject or a hobby for them. A serious part of the day must be dedicated to just word study — and not just the spelling, but also the language of origin, meaning, and pronunciation. Of this year’s final word, stromuhr, it is said that only one percent of the population would ever use it. The exercise of mind and discipline to something so worthwhile and useful is truly to be admired in every one of these participants.



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The [BBC](#) observed:

One can't help but feel a creeping sense of inadequacy as speller after speller steps up to the mike, as confident as a 14-year-old can be in his or her lengthening, gangly limbs.

After expertly quizzing the pronouncer about the etymology of a given word, they flawlessly tackle even the most cryptic ones.

The most we might have in common with these spellers is remembering the sense of competition from our own simple school bees, or the stress of working one's way through a spelling word in a classroom lineup. But it is enough to make us stop and enjoy each National Spelling Bee anew, as winners from all over the country gather once more to spell their way toward another championship.



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