

## Akeelah and the Bee

Rated PG For Language -- run time 112 minutes

**BEE:** *noun*, gathering of people for a specific purpose, work party. On the US frontier, women sometimes had quilting bees. This movie is about the Scripps National Spelling Bee—a spelling contest for kids. [www.spellingbee.com](http://www.spellingbee.com)

### PLOT

This story takes place over the course of one year. Eleven-year-old Akeelah lives in a poor neighborhood in south Los Angeles and goes to Crenshaw Middle School, a school which does not have many resources. Although bright, Akeelah is uninspired and skipping classes. She misses her deceased father who was a lover of words. Playing word games and making word lists is Akeelah's way of feeling close to him. When she gets in trouble at school, she's challenged to enter the school spelling bee and see how far she can progress: school bee > district bee > regional bee > national bee (in Washington DC).

### CHARACTERS

Akeelah Anderson - our star  
Mr. Cross - her English/spelling teacher in school  
Georgia - her best friend whose goal in life is to be a flight attendant  
Devon - her oldest brother, in the air force, home on leave for two weeks in the beginning scenes  
Terrance - her other brother, in danger of falling into gang activity  
Derrick T - local gang leader  
Mrs. Anderson - Akeelah's mom  
Kiara - Akeelah's older, single-mom sister  
Mr. Welch - school principal  
Dr. Joshua Larabee - Akeelah's coach  
Javier Mendez - fellow contestant  
Dylan Chiu - fellow contestant

### STEREOTYPES

**"Rich white kids"** on high academic track.

Nice schools, nice homes, use big words (I *wasn't* inspired you.)

**Asian kid**

Highly motivated, overachieving, with humorless, demanding parent

**Kids from "the hood,"** mostly African American

Black English, low expectations, threat of gangs, meager school resources

### THINGS TO LOOK FOR

What does Akeelah's mom value?

How did Akeelah deceive her mother?

Why did Dr. Larabee drop Akeelah after the regional?

Akeelah's opening monologue

"You know that feeling that no matter what you do or where you go, you just don't fit in? Don't know the word for it. Alienation. Estrangement. Incompatibility. Nah. Those ain't right. But there's gotta be a word for it, cause that's how I feel all the time. My name's Akeelah Anderson, and I'm eleven years old. And this all starts at Crenshaw Middle School in South Los Angeles."