

## The Spelling-Bee as Foreshadowing by Carole Oles

The auditorium swallowed  
contenders alive  
while the whole student body  
was made to endure  
Miss Riegel pronouncing the words  
like life-terms.

We knew what was important:  
arranging letters  
like workclothes on a line.  
*I* before *E* was order we could  
count on. We knew  
the maverick *weird*.

To be grade-school champ  
I spelled *impeccable*,  
a dashing stranger.  
An angel bent to my ear  
and whispered “Double *c*!”

In the citywide finals  
I was tasting the win  
when the judge gave me *fuschia*.

Where was my angel  
to warn of the snake,  
the sly *s*?  
What was the rule?

Later I looked up the word  
and stared long  
at that showy, pendant, crimson,  
unspellable flower.