

# [9.18] War of the Words

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## Transcript {David Langley}

Act 1

Scene 1 - KACL

[*Fade in. Frasier is on the air with a caller, Roz is in her booth.*]

**Frasier:** Lillian, the next time your perfectionist tendencies drive you to distraction, just remember this quotation from Henry James: "Excellence does not require perfection."

**Lillian:** [voice over] That's very helpful. Thank you.

**Frasier:** Or is it "demand"? Hmm... "require", "demand" "Excellence does not require perfection." "Excellence does not demand perfection."

**Roz:** Aren't they the same thing?

**Frasier:** Of course not, Roz! Shush! "Excellence"... "demand", "require", "demand", "require"... Oohh! Or is it "mandate"?

**Lillian:** [v.o.] I really have to go now.

[*There is a click and a dial tone as she disconnects.*]

**Frasier:** Oh, well, it doesn't really matter, anyway, does it? Meantime, Seattle, this is Doctor Frasier Crane, wishing you good day OH! It's "require", it is "require"! [*he laughs victoriously*] And good mental health.

[*He goes off the air and Roz comes over and holds something out.*]

**Roz:** Frasier, would you please give this to Freddie for me? It's for his spelling bee tomorrow.

**Frasier:** [*taking it*] Roz, it's not a spelling bee, it's the National Championship.

**Roz:** Oh. Ooh, when's Lilith coming in?

**Frasier:** [*rising*] Actually, she's not coming in, she'll be watching the competition ion from home. Her victory dance at the state finals earned her a long overdue suspension. So, what is this anyway?

**Roz:** It's a flattened penny. I found it at the railroad tracks once when I was going through a really bad time. But as soon as I picked it up, I started getting lucky.

**Frasier:** Oh, so that's where it all started.

**Roz:** No. Why are you turning a nice gesture into something dirty?

**Frasier:** I'm sorry, Roz. I know it didn't bring you that kind of

luck.

**Roz:** Thank you.

[She heads for her side as he grabs his briefcase.]

**Frasier:** Because that would be one tired penny.

[He hurries out as she glares at him. Fade out.]

Scene 2 - Frasier's Apartment

[Fade in. Frasier is sitting down. Sitting on dining chairs facing him, are Freddie, Martin and Eddie.]

**Frasier:** Eddie Crane, from Seattle, your word is "woof".

[Eddie barks. Frasier rolls his eyes, then Martin talks out of the corner of his mouth for him.]

**Martin:** W-O-O-F.

[He nudges Eddie, who barks again.]

**Frasier:** Very good. Frederick Crane, from Massachusetts, your word is "onomatopoeia"

[Freddie stands up and takes a breath.]

**Frasier:** Wrong. Where are your knees? I want to see spelling knees.

**Freddie:** Oh, yeah, right.

**Frasier:** The last thing I want is you passing out on stage because of locked knees.

**Freddie:** I know. Allison Sharpe, the "'Frisco Fainter".

**Frasier:** She went down like a sack of hammers. All right now, go to the hallway mirror and look at your form.

[Freddie walks off and Martin gets up.]

**Martin:** Aren't you two going a little overboard with this? The drills, the stance, the spelling diet...

[He sets back in his chair.]

**Frasier:** Dad, Freddie really wants to win this competition, I'm doing my best to help him.

**Martin:** Well, you shouldn't over train him. He needs to have some fun.

**Frasier:** I told him he could bring his clarinet! [off Martin's look] All right, I'll talk to him.

[Freddie comes back in.]

**Freddie:** Thanks, Dad, I think I got my stance down now.

**Frasier:** [rising] Good boy. Frederick, have a seat for a minute. There's something I want to tell you.

[Freddie sits back down in his chair, Frasier sits beside him.]

**Frasier:** Listen, I don't want you to get consumed by this spelling bee thing, all right? It's not important if you're a good speller or the best speller. The important thing is that you have fun. Okay?

**Freddie:** Okay, Dad. You know what would be really fun?

**Frasier:** What's that?

**Freddie:** Kicking butt in the spelling bee.

*[Frasier laughs and Freddie moves over to the couch as Niles and Daphne come in the front.]*

**Frasier:** Oh, Niles.

**Niles:** Hello all.

**Frasier:** Listen, I'm afraid I've got some bad news. I could only get two tickets for the spelling bee competition tomorrow.

**Daphne:** Oh, that's a shame. But we'll be there in spirit. It's probably just as well considering how emotional I get watching children compete. I keep thinking how much it means to them. Like the little girl who studies over candle light while her father's down at the local pub, drinking away the money for the light bill. Or the little girl on the school bus who pretends not to see her father waving at her from the pub. Then there's the little girl who thinks that by doing well she can grow up, purchase the local pub, and turn it into a circus so her father can keep his promise.

*[She bursts into tears and runs off to her room.]*

**Niles:** We had a little wine at lunch. Don't worry about the tickets. While I certainly would have gone to support Freddie, I have to admit wasn't looking forward to being back in that environment. *[to Freddie]* Don't get sidetracked by all the glitz and glamour of the bee. Spelling well is its own reward.

*[He heads off to Daphne's room.]*

**Freddie:** What was that about?

**Martin:** Well, your Uncle Niles has a painful history with spelling bees.

**Freddie:** Really? Was he any good?

**Martin:** Oh, one of the best to ever compete.

**Freddie:** Better than you Dad?

**Frasier:** Son, as good as I was, my spelling couldn't compare with Niles'. He was right up there with the likes of William Karek from Akron, and that Peterson girl from Omaha.

**Martin:** Except your uncle was even younger. Some people thought he wasn't ready, that it was a mistake to bring him up to The Show right of elementary school, but he made it. All the way to the last word.

**Freddie:** What happened?

**Frasier:** He didn't even try to spell it. He just stood there for a moment, then turned and walked off the stage.

**Martin:** He was immediately disqualified and he never competed again.

**Freddie:** Never?

**Martin:** Sure, he'd spell now and again. But only to help you out and you had to really need it, 'cause he could spot a set-up a mile away.

**Freddie:** Wow. Sounds to me like he choked.

**Martin:** Choked... OR, was he the victim of an elaborate conspiracy?

**Freddie:** Really?

*[Martin looks behind him.]*

**Martin:** Oh, I thought I heard him comin' down the hall. He choked.

*[Fade out.]*

*Scene 3 - The Spelling Championship*

*[Fade in. There are only four students left on the stage, including*

*Freddie. A young man is at the microphone, the moderator, Dr. Gaston, is at a podium.]*

**Contestant:** "Logorrhea". Um, can I have a definition?

**Martin:** Uh-oh, always a bad sign.

**Gaston:** Excessive use of words.

**Contestant:** L-O-G-O-R-H-E-A, "logorrhea".

*[A buzzer sounds.]*

**Gaston:** I'm sorry, that's incorrect.

*[The boy leaves the stage.]*

**Frasier:** So long, home school.

**Gaston:** And that completes the tenth round. We'll begin round eleven of the National Spelling Championship after a five minute intermission.

*[The audience and contestants get up and Frasier waves Freddie over.]*

**Frasier:** Freddie, you're doing great, son, great!

**Martin:** Yeah, you got it made. Especially since that Asian kid was eliminated. They're the ones you have to watch out for.

**Frasier:** Dad! Don't stereotype!

**Martin:** Not even a positive one? Oh geez, what's happenin' in this country?

*[He heads off. A young girl, one of the other contestants, walks past.]*

**Amanda:** Hi, Freddie.

**Freddie:** Hi, Amanda.

*[He looks after her, a goofy grin on his face, as Frasier gets a suspicious look on his.]*

**Frasier:** Don't let her distract you with her wiles, Son. There'll be plenty of women once you win this thing, all right? Okay, now, you were a little wobbly on that last word. Just remember, when the root word is Greek, the "uh" sound is made with the letter "Y".

*[Martin comes back behind him.]*

**Frasier:** So far, all the sneaky ones have had Greek roots.

**Martin:** Oh, so it's okay for you to stereotype!

**Frasier:** Oh...

**Freddie:** Dad, we've run over this a million times. I got it. *[to Martin]* Where'd you get the soda?

**Martin:** Oh, c'mon, I'll show you.

*[He leads Freddie outside, a man walks up to Frasier.]*

**John:** Hey, hi there. John Clayton.

**Frasier:** Oh, hi.

*[They shake.]*

**John:** My son, he's one of the finalists.

**Frasier:** Oh, nice to meet you. Frasier Crane, I'm Frederick's dad. You've got a great little speller there.

**John:** Ah, yeah. You too. First year, I take it?

**Frasier:** Uh-huh.

**John:** Look, let me give you a little advice: watch out for some of the parents. They can be kinda cutthroat.

**Frasier:** Well, thanks for the tip.

**John:** Yeah, no problem. So, you and Freddie, you work on all the usuals, roots, suffixes, prefixes?

**Frasier:** Yes, yes all of that.

**John:** Good, good. How about attitude? Breathing, endurance...

**Frasier:** Sure, sure. Endurance?

**John:** Excuse me.

*[He hurries over to his wife.]*

**John:** Betsy! The Crane kid's got no legs!

*[Dr. Gaston returns to the podium.]*

**Gaston:** All right, we're ready to resume.

*[The contestants come back on stage and the girl steps to the microphone.]*

**Gaston:** Amanda Abrams. Amanda, your word is "milieu".

**Amanda:** "Milieu", M-I-L-L-I-E-U, "milieu".

*[The buzzer sounds and Amanda walks off the stage. Frasier gleefully turns to Martin.]*

**Frasier:** Won't be long now.

*[He smiles confidently. Fade out.]*

Scene 4 - The Spelling Championship

#### 41 WORDS LATER

*[Fade in. The competition is continuing, with the Freddie and Warren Clayton standing side by side.]*

**Freddie:** "Syllepsis", S-Y-L-L-E-P-S-I-S, "syllepsis".

**Gaston:** Warren Clayton, "resipiscence".

**Warren:** R-E-C-I-P-I-S-C-E-N-C-E, "resipiscence".

*[The buzzer sounds.]*

**Gaston:** I'm sorry, but that's incorrect.

*[Warren walks off the stage.]*

**Gaston:** If Frederick Crane gets the next word, he will be the National Champion. Frederick, your word is "hermeneutic".

**Freddie:** Um, may I have a definition?

*[Frasier and Martin look at each other in alarm.]*

**Gaston:** Interpretive or explanatory.

**Freddie:** "Hermeneutic", H-E-R-M-E-N-E-U-T-I-C, "hermeneutic".

*[As he's been spelling the word, Frasier has been tensing up and spelling silently along with him.]*

**Gaston:** We have a new National Champion! Frederick Crane!

*[Frasier and Martin cheer. Frasier runs up to the stage as a woman hands Freddie the trophy.]*

**Gaston:** Congratulations son.

*[Frasier smiles and puts his arm around the woman behind Freddie to pose for the pictures. Fade out.]*

*Scene 5 - Frasier's Apartment*

**ACTUALLY, THE LETTER 'Y'  
ISN'T THAT FRIENDLY**

*[Fade in. Everyone is gathered around Freddie on the couch.]*

**Daphne:** When you were spelling that last word, I thought I was going to have a heart attack.

**Roz:** Weren't you scared?

**Freddie:** A little, but then I just kinda relaxed.

**Frasier:** THAT is your spelling stance working for you. Bend at the knees - spell with ease.

**Daphne:** Well, this calls for a toast. Is it all right if he has a little C-H-A-M-P-A-G...

**Frasier:** Daphne, he's the best speller in the country.

**Daphne:** So I should get the good stuff?

**Frasier:** Yes.

**Niles:** You should be very proud of your accomplishment, Freddie. Just keep it in perspective. And don't forget the twenty six little friends who got you here.

*[Martin comes in from the kitchen and goes to his chair.]*

**Martin:** Gather 'round, everybody, almost time for ESPN to air Freddie's interview.

**Frasier:** Oh, that's right!

*[He grabs the remote and turns on the TV. He then stands there, confused.]*

**Frasier:** You know, I have no idea where ESPN is.

*[He hands it to Martin, who takes it and changes the channel. Roz sits in a dining chair.]*

**Frasier:** Thanks Dad.

**Roz:** See, I told you that penny would bring him good luck.

**Frasier:** *[sitting]* Oh, well, actually, Roz, I never even gave it to him. See, with all of Freddie's hard work and dedication, inspired coaching...he had no need for your superstitious talisman.

*[The doorbell rings, Frasier goes to answer it.]*

**Roz:** It's just a gesture. I mean, I found it at the railroad track, not some enchanted wood.

*[Frasier opens the door to reveal Dr. Gaston from the competition.]*

**Frasier:** Oh, well, what a surprise, please come in. Everyone, this is Doctor Bernard Gaston from the spelling bee.

**Martin:** Oh, hi, Doc.

**Frasier:** Lovely of you to join us in our little celebration. Can I get you some refreshment?

**Gaston:** Unfortunately, this is not a pleasure visit. I must inform you that there has been an accusation of cheating.

**Martin:** Not the Asian kid!

[Everyone glares at him.]

**Martin:** What? I said NOT the Asian kid. Would somebody tell me the rules?

**Frasier:** Whoever the culprit is, we have no wish to soil this noble event by filing a formal protest. We're certainly happy with the way things turned out.

**Gaston:** I'm afraid it's Frederick who's been accused of cheating.

[Frasier gasps.]

**Freddie:** What!?

**Frasier:** I don't know what kind of a sick joke you're playing, but my son is no cheater!

**Martin:** I was there, I didn't see anything.

**Gaston:** Well we have evidence to the contrary. Mr. and Mrs. Clayton noticed an anomaly on the tape while they were making Warren watch it.

**Frasier:** What sort of an anomaly?

**Gaston:** You were clearly mouthing the letters as Frederick spelled the last word, Dr. Crane.

**Frasier:** I did no such thing!

**Gaston:** We have it on the tape.

**Frasier:** Well, if I did, it certainly wasn't a conscious act. It was like singing along at a concert. You know, I remember being admonished by the ushers for joining in a particularly intense performance of Das Lieb und der Uder!

[Freddie gets up.]

**Freddie:** I wasn't even looking at him!

**Gaston:** Let's not make this any more painful than it already is. The committee has reviewed the tape and decided to award the trophy to Warren Clayton.

**Freddie:** What?! You can't do that!

**Martin:** This stinks!

**Gaston:** I'm sure you'd like to avoid embarrassment as much we would so we'll just say this was all due to a technicality. That way, Frederick can keep his regional title and even attend the banquet tomorrow night for all the finalists.

[He reaches over and picks the trophy up from the coffee table.]

**Freddie:** This isn't fair.

**Gaston:** I'm sorry, son. I hope I'll see you at the dinner.

[He leaves.]

**Freddie:** Thanks a lot, Dad.

[He hurries off.]

**Roz:** You should have given him the penny.

[Fade out.]

Act 2

Scene 1 - Frasier's Apartment

[*Fade in. Martin is in his chair, Freddie is on the couch, playing a video game. Frasier comes in the front door.*]

**Frasier:** Great news! I have just spoken to a lawyer who believes we have a case against the spelling bee officials. Isn't that great?

[*Freddie keeps playing the game as Frasier hangs up his coat.*]

**Frasier:** Frederick, look, I know how upset you are. I'm so sorry. Frederick, aren't you going to say something?

[*Freddie puts down the controller.*]

**Freddie:** I talked to Mom today.

[*He heads for the kitchen.*]

**Frasier:** You're a bigger man than I am.

**Freddie:** That's what she said.

[*He exits.*]

**Frasier:** I've really done it this time, haven't I? I feel terrible. He just hates me.

**Martin:** No, he's disappointed, that's all.

**Frasier:** Still, he knows that if I made a mistake it was only because I wanted him to win so badly.

**Martin:** Oh, he'll get over it. Remember when you were thirteen, you had that science project? I came in your room and sat on it? You forgave me.

**Frasier:** True. Spent six months working on that project.

**Martin:** Well, my point is, accidents happen. He'll come to see that.

**Frasier:** I suppose you're right. Three perfectly good chairs in my room, you had to sit on my hybrid orchid.

**Martin:** Well, let's hope Freddie's as forgiving as you are.

[*Cut to - the kitchen. Niles is cooking, Freddie gets the ice cream out.*]

**Niles:** So, you going to go to that banquet tonight, Freddie?

**Freddie:** I don't think so. It'll just be a bunch of people saying bad stuff about me.

**Niles:** None of which is true.

**Freddie:** But they think it is.

[*Niles gets a scoop and bowl for Freddie.*]

**Freddie:** Uncle Niles, is it true that you walked out on the last word of the National Bee?

**Niles:** Now, where did you hear that?

**Freddie:** Dad and Grandpa. They said you were one of the best.

**Niles:** Well, they exaggerate.

**Freddie:** They said you were just as good as somebody named Karek.

**Niles:** "Just as good"? Funny. Anyway, the story is true. I never talked about it before, but I will. Since you also have the gift. Have a seat.

[*They sit down on the kitchen stools.*]

**Niles:** I was a little younger than you. I'd been winning numerous competitions, but I was obsessed with one thing and one thing only: the National Championship. The time finally came and



there I was, standing on that stage, waiting for the judge to say the final word, and suddenly it happened. It all clicked. All the rules, "i before e", assimilations, etymologies, they all became one. And then, became nothing. In that moment, I realized there was no word I couldn't spell. Competitions didn't matter anymore because I was one with the higher truth that is spelling. So when the judge said that last word, I just walked away.

**Freddie:** Didn't you care what people said?

**Niles:** Oh, people said a lot of things that weren't true. "He didn't know the word." "He was scared." "Mafia this..." No, it didn't bother me. Because they couldn't take away what I knew in my heart. You know how to spell, and it doesn't matter what anybody else thinks.

*[Freddie starts walking out.]*

**Niles:** Hey, hey, don't you want your ice cream?

**Freddie:** No, I have a banquet to go to.

*[He exits. Fade out.]*

### *Scene 2 - The Championship Hall*

*[Fade in. Freddie, Frasier and Niles come in and walk to their table. Amanda is there.]*

**Frasier:** Ah, here we are.

**Freddie:** Hi, Amanda.

*[She walks away without saying anything.]*

**Frasier:** Never mind her, Freddie. It's her problem, not yours. You didn't do anything wrong.

**Freddie:** I know. Neither did you. Excuse me.

*[He gets up and walks out as Dr. Gaston steps to the podium.]*

**Gaston:** Good evening. I'd like to take this opportunity to welcome you to this year's annual Spell-abration. Because of the irregularities with this year's event, this gathering has been renamed "The Unity Dinner" and is in honor of all the finalists.

*[There is polite applause, but Frasier looks shocked and leans across to Niles.]*

**Frasier:** What the hell is that supposed to mean? "Irregularities"?

**Niles:** Frasier, Frasier, let it go.

*[John Clayton comes up.]*

**John:** Crane, no hard feelings.

*[He offers his hand and Frasier shakes it.]*

**Frasier:** No feelings at all.

**John:** Now, don't be like that. You're not the first person tempted to get around the rules, you just got caught.

**Frasier:** I did not "get caught".

**John:** Well, cameras never lie and cheaters never prosper.

**Frasier:** *[rising]* And you never shut up!

**Niles:** *[getting up]* Frasier, Frasier, try to follow Frederick's example and carry ourselves with dignity.

[A security guard comes in, dragging Freddie and Warren along.  
Frasier, Niles and John hurry over.]

Guard: Where are your parents?

Niles: Freddie?

Frasier: What's going on?

Guard: I caught these two fighting in the men's room.

Warren: He punched me.

Frasier: Is this true?

Freddie: He deserved it!

Niles: Why'd you do it, Freddie?

Freddie: He called my dad a cheater!

Frasier: You were defending me?

Niles: Where's your blazer?

Freddie: It's in the bathroom.

Niles: Oh, dear. If it's touched the floor, we'll have to destroy it.

[He heads off.]

Frasier: Freddie, I want you to apologize to Warren right now.

John: Yes, and Warren, you apologize too. Being a name-caller's almost as bad as being a cheater.

Frasier: I am NOT a cheater! You are a thief. My son is the true champion.

Warren: Yeah, when your dad's here to help you.

Freddie: Hey, I can out spell you anytime, anyplace!

Warren: Oh yeah? How 'bout right now?!

John: Hold on Son, we don't have to prove anything.

Freddie: I can take you in five words!

Warren: Okay, you're on! For the trophy!

John: Hey, we already have the trophy. Crane, why don't you talk some sense into your boy, there?

Frasier: Freddie...

Freddie: Dad, I want to spell.

Frasier: What's the matter, John? You scared?

[There is a murmur in the crowd.]

John: For the trophy!

Gaston: We have already selected an official winner. If you'd like to brawl, take it someplace else.

John: Let's take it outside!

Frasier: To the streets!

[Everyone rushes out. Fade to - the alley behind the hall.]

Frasier: Sudden death, Scrips-Howard rules!

John: Bring it on!

[Niles comes out the door.]

Niles: People, stop please! Look at yourselves. This is wrong. What are words, after all, but a way to communicate, to bring us together? But you, you're using them as weapons! Now, we still have an opportunity to walk away from here as winners, and wouldn't that be the greatest Spell-abration of all?

Frasier: He's right, Son, let's go home.

[They turn and head for the door with Niles.]

**John:** Yeah, we're all winners. Except for the two cheaters!

*[The Crane boys stop, then collect themselves and continue.]*

**Warren:** Hey, you know how to spell "loser"? C-R-A-N-E.

*[Again, the Cranes halt a moment, then keep going.]*

**John:** You don't have to worry about ever seeing him again, Son.  
Chances are he'll end up in a state school.

*[Freddie, Frasier and Niles whirl around, rage on their faces.]*

**Niles:** How DARE you! *[to Freddie]* Can you take him?

**Freddie:** Yeah!

**Niles:** Then spell his ass off!

*[They rush back to the middle. Frasier grabs the dictionary from a bystander. Fade out.]*

#### **Credits:**

Freddie is holding the trophy. The other competitors are congratulating him. Amanda comes up and gives him kiss. Niles congratulates him and Freddie offers his uncle the trophy. Niles declines, so Freddie tosses it in a trash can. They head in, then Frasier hurries back out and recovers the trophy, going back inside with it. Fade out.

## **GUEST APPEARANCES**

#### **Special Guest Star**

TREVOR EINHORN as Frederick

#### **Guest Starring**

JOSH WISE as Warren Clayton

PHILIP CASNOFF as Dr. Bernard Gaston

JEFF PERRY as John

MORGAN DAVIS as Amanda

#### **Guest Callers**

NAOMI JUDD as Lillian

## **Legal Stuff**

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