Spelling Bees

Spelling contests, or spelling bees, got their start in the late 1700s when Benjamin Franklin suggested that teachers encourage excellence in spelling. Students were paired together to quiz each other until one student misspelled a word and the other was declared the winner. These spelling contests first began inside schoolhouses. They later made their way into the community because parents, friends, and neighbors came to watch students compete.

These contests became known as “bees” because they were community events, similar to quilting bees and corn-husking bees. The popularity of spelling bees spread throughout the country. Today, the tradition continues, as students compete in school, city, state, and national-level spelling bees!
Answer the questions.

1. What are competitions in spelling called?

2. When did these competitions get their start?

3. Who suggested that teachers encourage excellence in spelling?

4. Who attended spelling contests that were held in the community?

5. What other community events were similar to these spelling contests in the community?