

WORDS

I don't know why, but Callum always groaned or said something like "Useless" or "Loser" whenever we were in the same game or group.

One lunchtime, our games ran into each other, and he called me a _____.

Some kids laughed, and I could feel

my face getting hot. I didn't know what to say. Callum could see this, and he said it again. My dumbness spilled into my eyes.

"Shut up," I said. Callum smirked and said "Shut up" in a voice that was meant to sound like mine, adding the name he'd just called me.

Then he began to chant it. I put my foot behind his leg and pushed him so he fell backwards onto the concrete.

"Leave him alone," someone said, looking at me as the duty teacher arrived and marched us both to the office.

I wasn't crying. I wasn't.

"He shoved me over," said Callum.

"You called me a ... a name," I said.

"We don't tolerate fighting," said Ms Kelly.

"You need to learn to ignore people who say things you don't like. Defend yourself with words.

And Callum, don't tease people."

Then we had to use our words to apologise and our handshake to settle the matter.

But it wasn't settled. Callum kept calling me the name. He told his friends so they'd say it, too. Sometimes he'd

mouth it or make a sign with his hands that meant the name. The more I ignored him, the more he'd make a dart of it to throw at me.

One day, Mr Martin was calling the roll, but at Callum, he got his letters muddled and called out "Laccum".

Everybody laughed, even Callum's friends. "Are we lacking Laccum?" Mr Martin joked. "No, Laccum's here," hooted loud Ed.

Callum was trying to disappear into his desk. From then on, Laccum became his evil twin, jumping out at him whenever.

"You're hilarious, Laccum," I said the next time he called me a _____, which he did less and less.

You couldn't say Laccum without smiling. It was silly. It was empty. It was perfect.

James Brown



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by James Brown

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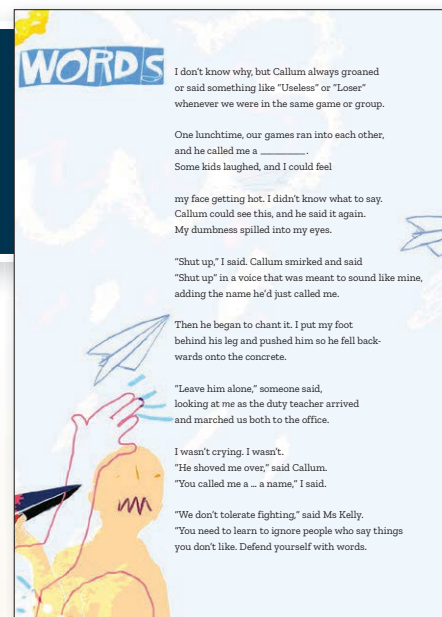
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