

## I PUNCHED MY BOSS IN THE FACE

### Pre-reading discussion questions:

The title of today's article is "I Punched My Boss in the Face"....

Why do you think the author punched his boss?

What were the likely results?

Do you ever fantasize about punching your boss?

## I punched my boss in the face

I punched my boss in the face. He told me he was going to lower my pay. I called him some *colorful words* and *walked out*. He followed me into the street and offered to fight me.

I found out later that he didn't expect me to actually fight him; he was just **talking sh\*t**. But I grabbed him by the hair with one hand and **blasted** him in the mouth with the other. He called a truce after his left eye swelled shut.

By then I'd had enough. I told him "Nice working with you!" and walked away. But he called me back. He had experienced a mysterious *change of heart* and he would let me *stay on* for the original pay rate.

I should have been suspicious of this guy to begin with when he spent half my interview **trashing** all his other employees for being lazy and incompetent. This guy was clearly a jerk, but the job paid well. Most of all, being unemployed **sucks**. So I took the job.

But things quickly *went downhill*. My co-workers all hated the boss. He was verbally abusive and constantly blamed us for problems caused by his mismanagement. Before long I was being told that I had lied about my experience and my pay would have to go down. The rest is history.

At first the feeling was euphoric. After years of **taking sh\*t** from as\*hole bosses, I had *fought back*. But even before my knuckles *healed up* I began to think otherwise.

The late 20th Century saw one defeat after another for organized labor in the United States. Ronald Reagan's firing of striking air-traffic controllers in 1981 was only the most public example of a vigorous campaign of union-busting that continues to the present day. The result has been a devaluing of labor in many skilled occupations, the loss of benefits and full-time positions in many sectors, and a diminished standard of living for the American working class. And it's tough to reverse this trend, as anti-union legislation makes it difficult to organize and the unions we already have are constantly under attack.

Most workers are now profoundly alone. They're deprived of job security, isolated from their co-workers, and *stretched so thin* by juggling multiple jobs and taking care of loved ones that there's no time for anything else, even if they decide that organizing is worth the risk of being fired. A friend of mine got a job at Wal-Mart and the first thing they told him was that unions were necessary 100 years ago, but nowadays the manager's door is open to grievances and that's how problems should be resolved.

Isn't that exactly what I did?

So no matter how amazing it felt when I punched my boss in the face, I just embodied the profound impotence of the 21st Century worker. Instead of cooperating with my co-workers to form a union capable of fighting for our common interests, getting higher pay, slowing down work, and going on strike if we don't get what we want, I stood as one.

The fact that I got what I wanted is irrelevant; This won't work 99.99 percent of the time, never mind the million reasons why workers would be unable or unwilling to blast their boss like they were Mark Wahlberg on the Red Line.

I'm not a Christian; I don't renounce violence for moral reasons; I don't have an ethical objection to what I did. But punching your boss is no alternative to fighting back for real, and that can only be done together.

### Vocabulary activity 1: New words

Write down any difficult or new words from this passage. Then, working with a partner, try to come up with a definition using context clues:

### Vocabulary activity 2: Slang

The words on the left can be found *italicized* in the text. Match them to their definitions on the right.

- |                       |   |
|-----------------------|---|
| 1) Blast _____        | a) to be bad/shitty/annoying                          |
| 2) Talking shit _____ | b) To punch   |
| 3) Trash _____        | c) to withstand (put up with) a negative situation    |
| 4) Take shit _____    | d) to speak badly about another person                |
| 5) Sucks _____        | e) Speaking aggressively, negatively, or untruthfully |

### Vocabulary activity 3: Idioms, expressions, & phrasal verbs

The words on the left can be found **in bold** in the text. Match them to their definitions on the right.

- |                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| 1) Walk out _____        | a) expletives, curses                           |
| 2) Stay on _____         | b) to recover from an injury                    |
| 3) To go downhill _____  | c) to continue in a job or role                 |
| 4) Fight back _____      | d) to change one's opinion                      |
| 5) Heal up _____         | e) when a situation becomes worse               |
| 6) Stretched thin _____  | f) to leave in disgust                          |
| 7) Colorful words _____  | g) to resist injustice                          |
| 8) Change of heart _____ | h) having little time and many responsibilities |

### Textual analysis: Answer each question with at least 2-3 sentences.

- 1) How would you describe the author's personality?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What type of magazine do you think this article appeared in? Why do you think that?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) What is the author's opinion of individual resistance in the workplace?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 4) Do you agree with the author that the use of violence can, at times, be morally justified?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 5) How do you think the author feels about the "American dream"?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 6) What is the author's understanding of the history of organized labor in the US during the last half century? Is it a similar situation in your home country?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 7) Do you agree with the author's conclusions about how workers can fight back? Why or why not?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 8) Do you think "I Punched my Boss in the Face" is an effective title for this article? If not, suggest an alternative.

## ANSWER KEY

Activity 2:	Slang
The words on the left can be found <i>italicized</i> in the text. Match them to their definitions on the right.	
1) Blast ___b___	a) to be bad/shitty/annoying
2) Talking shit ___e___	b) To punch
3) Trash ___d___	c) to withstand (put up with) a negative situation
4) Take shit ___c___	d) to speak badly about another person
5) Sucks ___a___	e) Speaking aggressively, negatively, or untruthfully

Activity 3:	Idioms, expressions, & phrasal verbs
The words on the left can found <b>in bold</b> in the text. Match them to their definitions on the right.	
1) Walk out ___f___	a) expletives, curses
2) Stay on ___c___	b) to recover from an injury
3) To go downhill ___e___	c) to continue in a job or role
4) Fight back ___g___	d) to change one's opinion
5) Heal up ___b___	e) when a situation becomes worse
6) Stretched thin ___h___	f) to leave in disgust
7) Colorful words ___a___	g) to resist injustice
8) Change of heart ___d___	h) having little time and many responsibilities

## NOTES

Lesson should take up to two hours based on levels of student discussion.

You may also want to consider having students switch answers after the writing activity so they can give each other feedback.

This article originally appeared in Vice magazine:

[http://www.vice.com/en\\_uk/read/i-punched-my-boss-in-the-face](http://www.vice.com/en_uk/read/i-punched-my-boss-in-the-face)