

Gobsmacked



“Gobsmacked” is a slang British word that means astounded or astonished. It originated in 1921 when Lorraine Dinklaker and Henrietta Gob-Smythe were playing a sedate hand of crazy eights. According to reliable sources, Henrietta discarded a four of hearts onto a three of clubs, a clear violation of game rules, and Lorraine protested. Henrietta responded by asking Lorraine to “step outside” where they could “discuss the matter like ladies.” Well, no sooner had Lorraine followed Henrietta into the garden when two men dashed up to them. “Pardon, Miss,” said the younger one to Lorraine, “but ’ave you seen a weasel ’ereabouts? We been trainin’ ’em, y’see, but one of ’em – Chauncey, that’s ’is name – ’e run off!” Lorraine was quite understandably distracted so she utterly failed to anticipate Henrietta’s next move: a nasty uppercut to Lorraine’s jaw. Lorraine briefly saw stars before the ground rushed up to meet her. Later, when asked to describe what happened, she said she’d been sucker punched by that no-good Henrietta Gob-Smythe. Each retelling of the story resulted in a slight disparity, until Loretta had been Gob-Smythe sucker punched, then Gob-Smythe-smacked, and finally Gobsmacked – etymology at its best!