

Pig Heart Boy

Malorie Blackman is a very successful British writer. Her novel, *Pig Heart Boy*, focuses on thirteen-year-old Cam Kelsey. After a serious infection damaged his heart, Cam is in urgent need of a heart transplant. In this extract, Cam's parents argue about a radical alternative solution...

How was this said?

As I turned the key in the front door, I could hear at once that Mum and Dad were at it again. 'Now there's a surprise!' I mouthed silently, adding, 'I wonder what they're arguing about today.'

As if I didn't know!

5 Shutting the door quietly behind me, I tiptoed through the hall to the living-room door.

'No, I won't allow it!' Mum raged.

I recognized that tone of voice. It burnt like a laser. I winced, aware of how my dad would react to it. I wasn't wrong. *what do we call this?*

10 'Don't talk to me like that. I have some say in this too. And I've weighed up all the consequences. I've listed all the pros and cons. We don't have any other choice—'

'We? This has nothing to do with us. You went ahead and did this all on your own — as usual.' Mum's voice was lemon-bitter. [...]

Why are these words written in italics?

'It's for Cameron's own good. It's for the good of this whole family,' said Dad.

15 'Because you say so?' Mum scoffed. 'From where I'm standing it looks as if what you want to do is deform your own son...' *what does this mean?*

'What d'you mean "deform"?' Now it was Dad's turn to hit the roof and pass right through it. 'How dare you say that? You wouldn't say that if this was a human heart—'

'But that's the whole point. It's not, is it? You want to make our son a pig-heart boy.'

A pig-heart boy? What on earth was Mum talking about? I frowned as I leaned in closer.

20 'Better a pig's heart that works than a human heart that doesn't,' Dad argued. 'Better than no heart at all.' [...]

'Stop it! Stop it, both of you!' I shouted.

Why has he chosen to run away?

I couldn't bear to listen to any more. I turned and raced up the stairs, stomping down with my feet as hard as I could as I ran. I only got halfway up the stairs before I started hurting, so I slowed down, but I didn't stop.

'Cam? Cam, wait,' Mum called out.

I didn't answer. I couldn't. But I wanted to let both of them know that I was here. They were talking about me as if I didn't have a mind of my own, as if I couldn't make my own decisions. How could they? *How dare they?* It was my body. My heart.

What does this phrase mean?

Reading Comprehension Homework

- ① Why do you think the author has used so much direct speech in this extract?
- ② How do you think Cam feels at the end of the extract? Explain your answer.
- ③ Do you think Cam should have the pig heart transplant? Explain your answer.
- ④ Do mum and dad have the same opinion? Do you agree with either of them?