

Name: _____

Date: _____

Grade: _____

English Language

Instructions: Read the passage twice. Then answer the questions that follow.

Although it was only five o'clock, and the sun had already set and the evening was very still, as all spring evenings are, just before the birds begin to sing themselves to sleep; or maybe tell one another bedtime stories. The village was quiet. The men had gone away to fish for the night after working all the morning with the sowing. Women were away milking the cows in the little fields among the rocks.

Brigid Gill was alone in her cottage waiting for her son to come home from school. He was now an hour late, and he was only nine she was very nervous about him especially as he was her only child and he was a wild boy, always getting into mischief, truanting from school, fishing on Sunday and building stone 'castles' in the great rock above the village. She kept telling herself that she would give him a good scolding and beating when he came in, but at the same time her heart was thumping with anxiety and she started at every sound, rushing out to the door and looking down the winding road, that was now dim with the shadows of the evening. So many things could happen to a little boy.

His dinner of dried fish and roast potatoes was being kept warm in the oven among the ashes beside the fire on the hearth, and on the table there was a plate, a knife and a little mug full of buttermilk.

At last she heard the glad cries of the schoolboys afar off, and rushing out she saw their tiny forms scampering, not up the road, but across the rocks to the left, their caps in their hands.

"Thank God," she said, and then she persuaded herself that she was very angry. Hurriedly she got a small dried willow rod, sat down on a chair within the door and waited for Stephen.

He advanced up the yard very slowly, walking near the stone face that bounded the vegetable garden, holding his satchel in his left hand by his side, with his cap in his right hand, a red-cheeked slim boy, dress in a close-fitting grey trousers that reached a little below his knees and a blue sweater. His feet were bare and covered with all sorts of mud. His face perspired and his great soft blue eyes were popping out of his head with fright. He knew his mother would be angry.

At last he reached the door and, holding down his head, he entered the kitchen. The mother immediately jumped up and seized him by the shoulder. The boy screamed, dropped his satchel and his cap and clung to her apron. The mother raised the rod to

strike, but when she looked down at the trembling body, she began to tremble herself and dropped the stick. Stooping down, she raised him up and began kissing him, crying at the same time with tears in her eyes.

“What’s going to become of you at all, at all? God saves us, I haven’t the courage to beat you and you’re breaking my heart with your wickedness.”

The boy sobbed, hiding his head in his mother’s bosom.

“Go away,” she said thrusting him away from her, “and eat your dinner. Your father will give you a good **thrashing** in the morning. I’ve spared you often and begged him not to beat you, but this time I’m not going to say a word for you. You’ve my heart broken, so you have. Come here and eat your dinner.”

She put the dinner on the plate and pushed the boy into the chair. He sat down sobbing, but presently he wiped his eyes with his sleeve and began to eat **ravenously**. Gradually his face brightened and he moved about on the chair, settling himself more comfortably and forgetting all his fears of mother and the thrashing he was going to get the next morning in the joy of satisfying the hunger. The mother sat on the doorstep, knitting in silence and watching him lovingly from under her long black eyelashes.

From The Short Stories of Liam O’Flaherty

1. Where did this incident take place? _____

- a. in the city
- b. in the village
- c. at school

(1pt.)

2. When did the incident occur? _____

- a. early morning
- b. early afternoon
- c. late evening

(1pt)

3. What problem did Brigid have with her son, Stephen?

_____ (1pt)

4. What did she do when he came home?

_____ (1pt)

5. What did Stephen look like when he arrived home?

(2pt)

6. Which pair of words describe Brigid? _____

- a. cruel and vicious
- b. sympathetic and caring
- c. cheerful and contented

(1pt)

7. The author's main purpose in the story is to _____

- a. entertain the reader with a family scene
- b. persuade children not to play after school
- c. show the mixed emotions of a caring mother

(1pt)

8. Which pair of words best describe Stephen? _____

- a. determined and fearless
- b. adventurous and innocent
- c. spiteful and wicked

(1pt)

9. Why did the mother not punish Stephen?

(1pt)

