“Because,” said his wife, “don’t you see, it’s the only thing we can do. I can’t control the child …” Her words flew from her lips. They rang round him, rang round his tired head. “We can’t possibly afford a nurse. The servant girl has more than enough to do. And his naughtiness is beyond words. You don’t understand, Edward; you can’t, you’re at the office all day.”

The bear poked out his tongue. The angry voice went on. Edward sank into a chair.

“What am I to beat him with?” he said weakly.

“Your slipper, of course,” said his wife. And she knelt down to untie his dusty shoes.

“Oh, Edward,” she wailed, “you’ve still got your cycling clips on in the drawing room. No, really –”

“Here, that’s enough.” Edward nearly pushed her away. “Give me that slipper.” He went upstairs. He felt like a man in a dark net. And now he wanted to beat Dicky. Yes, he wanted to beat something. My God, what a life! The dust was still in his hot eyes, his arms felt heavy.

THINK

How does Edward feel when he gets home?
What does his wife do that makes him feel worse?
Why does he decide to beat Dicky?

Glossary

• **afford**: have enough money to buy/give work to
• **cycling clips**: metal circles that hold the bottom of trousers so they stay clean on a bicycle
• **poked out**: put out
• **wailed**: cried; moaned
He pushed open the door of Dicky’s tiny room. Dicky was standing in the middle of the floor in his nightclothes. At the sight of him, Edward’s heart gave a warm throb of rage.


“Come on, now. Be quick about it,” said Edward, and then, holding the slipper tight, he hit Dicky hard three times. “There, that’ll teach you to behave properly to your mother.”
After Reading

Comprehension

1. What does Dicky Bendall do to annoy his mother?

2. What does he do immediately after he is naughty?
   a) He goes to his room. □
   b) He starts crying. □
   c) He runs out into the garden. □
   d) He apologizes. □

3. Why does his mother not punish him immediately?

4. Mrs. Spears tells Mrs. Bendall about three ways she punished her boys. List them and say which one she thought was best.
   a) ..............................................................
   b) ..............................................................
   c) ..............................................................

5. How does Mrs. Bendall react to what Mrs. Spears says? Does she tell Mrs. Spears what she thinks?

6. How has she dealt with Dicky before when he was naughty?

7. What happens when Mr. Bendall comes home from the office?
8 What is the significance of the “brown china bear”? How does it make Mr. Bendall feel?

9 Has Mr. Bendall ever beaten his son before?

10 Why does he decide to beat Dicky now. Tick.

   a) Because Dicky is naughty and needs to be punished.  
   b) Because he feels trapped and frustrated.  
   c) Because he has tried other ways to discipline Dicky and they haven’t worked.

11 How does he feel after he has beaten Dicky? Choose adjectives from the box below.

   angry  confused  guilty  happy  relaxed  
   relieved  satisfied  tired  worried

12 What does he remember from the past? How does this add to the way he is feeling?