

Class XII English Notes
Flamingo
Chapter-1 The Last Lesson

“The Last Lesson”, beautifully brings out the human tendency to postpone the learning of things feeling there is plenty of time to do so but they don’t realize when the doomsday will dawn and bring an end to our hopes and aspirations.

Franz is scared of going to school that day as his French teacher Mr. Hamel had announced a test on participles which he has not learnt. Although, Franz wants day out of the school and enjoy beauty of nature- the bright sunshine, the birds chirping in the woods, but eventually plans to go to school.

On the way, he passes through the Town Hall and sees the huge crowd around the Notice board. He does not stop as Bulletin board served all bad news, lost battles, the drafts and orders of the commanding officers. He sees Prussian soldiers drilling but resists.

On reaching the school, the changes he noticed were:

- Instead of noisy classrooms everything was as quiet as Sunday morning.
- All students were already in the classroom.
- Mr. Hamel, the French teacher did not scold him and told him very kindly to take his seat.
- He was dressed in his Sunday best- beautiful green coat, frilled shirt and black embroidered cap which he wore on functions and prize ceremonies only.
- Villagers occupying the last benches- old Hauser, former mayor and postmaster were also there.
- M. Hamel announced the notice which was served from Berlin as from tomorrow onwards German would be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine;

He realizes that, that is what was put up on the bulletin board. Franz could not believe that it would be his last lesson of French. He repented that he does not know his own mother tongue and for not taking his lessons seriously.

Now he realizes the reason why teacher is dressed in his Sunday best and villagers sitting at the back to pay tribute to M. Hamel for his 40 yrs of sincere service and also to express their solidarity with France. M. Hamel realizes that all three, the children, the parents and he himself are to be blamed for losing respect and regard for the mother tongue.

Franz is called to recite the lesson and he makes mistakes, but opposite to his thinking teacher does not scold him rather preaches that one should not waste time and postpone the things

thinking that there is plenty of time. Always keep the mother tongue close to your heart as it is the key to the prison of slavery.

Atmosphere in class: teacher teaching sincerely and patiently, students and others studying with utmost sincerity. Franz wondered sarcastically if Prussians could force pigeons to coo in German. M. Hamel overcome with emotions could not speak and wrote on the black board "Long Live France" and dismisses the class.

- Franz is afraid of going to school as he has not learnt participles.
- He wants to enjoy beauty of nature. The bright sunshine, the birds chirruping in the woods,
- Prussian soldiers drilling but resisted. Bulletin board: all bad news, lost battles, the drafts and orders of the commanding officers: wondered what it could be now
- The changes he noticed in the school. - Instead of noisy classrooms everything was as quiet as Sunday morning -
- The teacher does not scold him and told him very kindly to go to his seat -
- The teacher dressed in his Sunday best.

Villagers occupying the last benches- To pay tribute to M. Hamel for his 40 yrs of sincere service and also to express their solidarity with France.

M. Hamel making the announcement that that would be the last French lesson; realizes that, that was what was put up on the bulletin board.

Franz realizes that he does not know his own mother tongue Regretted why he had not taken his lessons seriously.

Also realizes the reason why teacher was dressed in his Sunday best and villagers sitting at the back.

M. Hamel realizes that all three, the children , the parents and he himself are to be blamed for losing respect and regard for the mother tongue.

Always keep the mother tongue close to your heart as it is the key to the prison of slavery.

Atmosphere in class: teacher teaching sincerely and patiently, students and others studying with utmost sincerity. Franz wonders sarcastically if Prussians could force pigeons to coo in German.

M. Hamel overcome with emotions could not speak and wrote on the black board "Long Live France"

.Talking about the Text

1. **"When a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison. "**

Can you think of examples in history where a conquered people had their language taken away from them or had a language imposed on them?

Answer: Some examples of the native language taken away from its people and/or imposition of the language of the conqueror are:

- (a) Portuguese becoming the lingua franca of Angola.
- (b) English imposed on the various Celtic peoples.
- (c) Spanish imposed on the Basques and the Catalans.
- (d) Turkish imposed on the Kurds.

2. What happens to a linguistic minority in a state? How do you think they can keep their language alive? For example:

Punjabis in Bangalore

Tamilians in Mumbai

Kannadigas in Delhi

Gujaratis in Kolkata

Answer: A linguistic minority in a state does not have as much liberty to exercise linguistic skills as the natives of the state. They initially try to learn the jargons in order to cope with the day-to-day life activities and finally begin to understand the native language with regular interaction. At the workplace and educational organizations, English or the link language helps a lot to cope up with the work and learning process. But, when it comes to understanding the basic norms of the society in order to socialize, one does face a sort of linguistic barrier during communication.

To keep their language alive, the linguistic minorities can form small communities where they can celebrate their festivals as per their traditions. Moreover, they can continue to speak their native language at their homes in order to make their children learn the language. People must, even, try to visit their native places at regular intervals in order to stay close to their roots.

3. Is it possible to carry pride in one's language too far?

Do you know what 'linguistic chauvinism' means?

Answer: Yes, it is possible to carry pride in one's language too far if one is fond of one's own language at the cost of others. Indifference towards other languages is not healthy for any democracy like India. When the sense of belonging to one's own language crosses the thin line between 'pride' and 'proud', it becomes linguistic chauvinism. If people feel good about their languages and

traditions, they must have tolerance for other languages too. Everybody has the right to follow the religion as well as speak the language as per his/her desire. In fact, it is disparaging to distort the names of communities, for example, Bongs for Bengalis, Guju for Gujaratis

Working with Words

1. English is a language that contains words from many other languages. This inclusiveness is one of the reasons it is now a world language, for example:

Petite – French

Kindergarten – German

Capital – Latin

Democracy – Greek

Bazaar – Hindi

Find out the origin of the following words.

Tycoon, Tulip, Logo, Bandicoot, Barbecue, Veranda, Robot, Zero, Ski, Trek

Answer: Tycoon – Japanese

Tulip – French

Logo – Greek

Bandicoot – Telugu

Barbecue – Spanish

Veranda – Hindi

Robot – Czech

Zero – Babylonians, Mayans and Indians

Ski – Norwegian

Trek – Dutch