

CBSE TEST PAPER-02
Class - 12 English Core (The Last Lesson)

General Instructions:

- All questions are compulsory
 - Question No.1 to 7 carries 3 marks each.
 - Question No. 8 to 10 carries 6 marks each.
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1. How did books become Franz's best friends?
2. Why was Franz even more surprised when he entered the class?
3. Describe the background in which 'The Last Lesson' of Alphonse Daudet has been set.
4. What was the temptation and how did Franz resist it?
5. What did Franz see when he passed in front of the town hall on the way to school ?
6. Why had M. Hamel put on his fine Sunday clothes? Why were the old men of the village sitting there in the back of the classroom?
7. Why did people throng to the bulletin-board?
8. Justify the title "The Last Lesson".
9. What impression do you form of M Hamel on the basis of your study of the story “The Last Lesson”?
10. Franz thinks, “Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?” What could this mean?

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Answers

1. The message conveyed by M. Hamel about the order from Berlin (of imposing German language on the French districts of Alsace and Lorraine) was a thunderclap for little Franz. He immediately felt sorry for not being sincere in the school and for not learning the French language and other lessons properly. His books, which seemed a nuisance and a burden earlier were now Franz's old friends.
2. Franz was firstly surprised that usual bustle and commotion when school began were missing and that there was a deafening silence in its place. He was also surprised to hear M. Hamel speak kindly to him in spite of him being late.
After he got over his fear of reprimand, he saw that his teacher had on his beautiful green coat, his frilled shirt, and the little black silk cap, all embroidered, that he never wore except on inspection and prize days. But the thing that surprised Franz the most was that the back benches that were always empty were filled with the village people sitting quietly just like themselves – but strangely solemn and sad.
3. 'The Last Lesson' is set in the days of the Franco-Prussian War (1870-1871). France was defeated by Prussia (Germany). By an order from Berlin, German language was imposed on the French districts of Alsace and Lorraine. The lesson describes how a teacher in Alsace, M. Hamel, reacts to this shocking news. His students and even the villagers share his views.
4. M. Hamel was to question the students on participles. Franz knew nothing about them and feared a scolding. For a moment he was tempted to run away and spend the day out of doors. The weather was warm. The day was bright. Woods, open fields and chirping of birds tempted him. But he overcame his temptation and hurried off to school.
5. Franz passed the town hall on his way to school. There was a great crowd in front of the bulletin-board. For the past two years all their bad news had come from there. The people thronged there to hear the news of last battles or the orders of the commanding officer. They verified everything from there.
6. M. Hamel had put on his fine Sunday clothes to highlight the occasion. The old men of the village had come there to show their sympathy and respect to the teacher. It was their way to thank M. Hamel for his forty years of faithful service. They had also come to show

their respect to France and their most beautiful language French.

7. People thronged in front of the bulletin-board to get important news of last battles or the orders of the commanding officer. They verified everything from there. This time the notice on the bulletin-board was about an order from Berlin which said that from that time onwards only German would be taught in the schools of the French districts of Alsace and Lorraine.
8. The story 'The Last Lesson' highlights the human tendency that there is plenty of time to do things; hence, man keeps postponing the lessons of life, oblivious to the fact that life is subject to change. The people of Alsace always thought they had plenty of time to learn the lessons; therefore, they did not give much importance to school. They preferred their children to work on the farms and mills instead of having them learn the lessons. Even Franz, the narrator, always looked for opportunities to skip the school and collect birds' eggs. However, the unexpected happens and an order is received from Berlin regarding compulsory teaching of German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. It is then that they realise that they would be deprived of what they had been evading all this while. The last French lesson taught by M. Hamel symbolises the loss of language and the loss of freedom for France. It becomes an emotional lesson rendered by M. Hamel to the villagers, signifying the changing order of life and its impact on the sensibilities and emotions of people. The marching soldiers under the windows represent the dawn of Prussia in France, defeat of the French people and the resultant threat to their language and culture. The story is aptly titled as it evokes the consciousness in the reader not to put off things and do what one can do that day. M. Hamel's bold 'Long live France' on the blackboard becomes substantial evidence of his sadness, patriotism and finality that is reflected in his motionless posture, his fixed gaze on things in the classroom and his eventual words- 'School is dismissed – You may go'.
9. M. Hamel is an experienced teacher who has been teaching in school for forty years. He imparts primary education in all subjects. He is a hard task master and students like Franz, who are not good learners, are in great dread of being scolded by him.

The latest order of the Prussian rulers upsets him. He had to leave the place forever and feels heart broken. He feels sad but exercises self-control. He had the courage to hear every lesson to the last.

His performance during the last lesson is exemplary. He is kind even to a late-comer like Franz. He uses a solemn and gentle tone while addressing the students. He has a logical mind and can analyze problems and deduce the reasons responsible for it. The problem for Alsace is that it puts off learning till tomorrow.

He knows the emotional hold of a language over its users. He is a good communicator and explains everything patiently. Partings are painful and being human, M. Hamel too is no exception. He fails to say good-bye as his throat is choked. On the whole, he is a patriotic gentleman.

10. Alphonse Daudet's 'The Last Lesson' very prominently raises the question of linguistic and cultural hegemony of the colonial and imperial powers and their lust for controlling the world and influencing their cultures and identities. Prussians acquired the districts of Alsace and Lorraine in Franco-Prussian War, but they were not satisfied with mere political domination, they desired to enforce their own language on the people of the defeated nation. They released the order that from now German would be taught in schools rather than French. Franz wondered whether they would make even pigeons sing in German? It means that they had grown up using French as their language and now snatching away their language from them would be unfair and unkind. The language was as natural to them as cooing is to the pigeon. So, compulsion to speak another language is like dominating the force of nature and enslaving it. As it is next to impossible to alter the way pigeons sing, in the same way it is difficult for people to accept a language which is forcibly imposed on them. Adopting a new language causes pain and discomfort.