

Long-Answer Questions

Q.1. What is 'linguistic chauvinism'? Analyse the order from Berlin in this light. How do you justify M. Hamel's views about French and the new-found love of the people towards their language?

Ans. Carrying pride in one's language too far leads to 'linguistic chauvinism'. We can analyse the order from Berlin in this light. It is nothing but a pure example of linguistic chauvinism. The imposition of German language over the French speaking population can't be justified at all. It is the worst kind of colonialism.

M. Hamel's love for French is genuine. The shocking order from Berlin arouses patriotic feelings in him. He loves French and feels it to be the most beautiful language in the world. He calls it the clearest and most logical language too. He regrets that the people of Alsace did not pay much heed to the learning of this great language. He asks the people to safeguard it among themselves. It is the key to their unity and freedom.

The people of Alsace, particularly the village elders, suddenly realise how precious their language is to them. Students like Franz too are not immune to patriotic feelings. Franz feels sorry for neglecting the learning of French. He hates the idea of German language being imposed on them. He remarks sarcastically, "Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?" The last lesson was so impactful that it helped to revive the love for the language among the people of Alsace.

Q.2. How can you estimate M. Hamel as a man with a ruler and as a man with a gesture?

OR

How does M. Hamel prove to be an ideal teacher?

Ans. In 'The Last Lesson', Alphonse Daudet presents M. Hamel's character with due sympathy and respect. Initially, he is presented in the mould of a traditional schoolmaster. He used his terrible ruler under his arm. Everyone could hear the rapping of the 'great ruler' on the table even outside in the street. Franz reminds us 'how cranky' M. Hamel was. The students used to dread their schoolmaster. Franz was scared of being scolded as he had not prepared his lesson on participles. For a moment he even thought of running away from school. Mr Hamel was a hard task master. He maintained discipline in the class. The other side of Mr Hamel's character is seen after the order from Berlin came. He had been transformed now. He became soft and gentle towards his students. He didn't scold Franz for coming late. He did not even use his ruler when little Franz got mixed up and confused when his turn to recite came. He declared that it was his last lesson in French as from the next day German would be taught in the

schools of Lorraine and Alsace. He would leave the next day. A new teacher would come in his place. He wore his best dress in honour of the last lesson.

M. Hamel was given respect not only by his students but even by the village elders. He was totally dedicated to the cause of teaching. He had been teaching for forty years in the same school. The village elders came to pay their respect to such a grand teacher. They sat on the back benches to listen to his last lesson.

M. Hamel loved France and French from the depth of his heart. He regarded French as the most beautiful language in the world. He told the people to guard it among themselves and never to forget it. On hearing the sound of trumpets of the Prussian soldiers under his window, patriotic feelings overpowered him. He mounted the chair and tried to speak however something choked him. He wrote "Vive La France" with a piece of chalk on the blackboard and dismissed the class.

Q.3. Write a character sketch of Franz.

Ans. Franz was a student of a school in Alsace. His schoolmaster was M. Hamel. Franz was not brilliant. Franz enjoyed spending time out of doors. He liked the warm and bright day and loved to listen to the chirping of the birds and watching the drilling of the prussian soldiers. He preferred this to being in the classroom. He didn't prepare his lesson on participles. When he was asked to recite, he got mixed up and confused. He was not excited to go to school and did not show any interest in M. Hamel's teaching. But he was scared of M. Hamel's scolding. He always dreaded the great ruler that M. Hamel kept under his arm. Franz knew how 'cranky' M. Hamel was.

However, Franz was forced to change his opinion about M. Hamel. An order came from Berlin pronouncing that German language would be taught in the schools of French districts of Alsace and Lorraine. On knowing that it was the last lesson that Mr. Hamel was going to deliver, his views about him changed. He started respecting the man who had spent forty years in the same school. He felt sorry for not learning French. He shared M. Hamel's views about French. It was the most beautiful language in the world. Franz sarcastically remarked, "Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?" After the last lesson his views about French took a patriotic turn. He listened to M. Hamel's last lesson with rapt attention and dignity and regretted having been careless and inattentive.

Q.4. Our native language is part of our culture and we are proud of it. How does the presence of village elders in the classroom and M. Hamel's last lesson show their love for French?

[CBSE (AI) 2016]

OR

Our language is part of our culture and we are proud of it. Describe how regretful M. Hamel and the village elders are for having neglected their native language, French.

[CBSE Delhi 2016]

Ans. M. Hamel told the students and villagers that henceforth only German would be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. Those who called themselves Frenchmen would neither be able to speak nor write it. He praised French as the most beautiful, the clearest and most logical language in the world. He said that for the enslaved people, their language was the key out of prison. Only then the people realised the importance of their language. This shows people's love for their own culture, traditions and country. Pride in one's language reflects pride in motherland.

When Franz jumbled while it was his turn to answer, M. Hamel expresses regret at the pathetic state of the language among the folks of Alsace.

He regrets the fact that everyone chose to Procrastinate. Also he felt the parents preferred that their children worked in the farms for that extra income. He worried that the Germans would ridicule them for being incapable of speaking and writing their language. He blames everyone including himself for being careless lazy and Lackadaisical. (unenthusiastic, lack of determination).

Q.5. Everybody during the last lesson is filled with regret. Comment. (The last Lesson)

[CBSE (AI) 2015]

Ans. Everybody during the last lesson is filled with regret. There was a general sadness about not being able to utilise the opportunities of learning French when it was easily accessible. Franz wished he had attended classes more often and regretted not being attentive in his classes earlier. He suddenly found his lessons more interesting and easy. The villagers, who were sitting at the usually empty back benches and had come to show their respect and gratitude to M. Hamel, regretted not going to school more than they did. The order also brought about a great change in the feelings of the people towards their country and their native language. M. Hamel regretted sending his students to water his flowers instead of learning their lessons. He also regretted giving holiday to students whenever he wanted to go on fishing.