

TEXTBOOK: FLAMINGO
LESSON: THE LAST LESSON
AUTHOR: ALPHONSE DAUDET

STEP 1: Watch a **short movie** on the chapter 'The Last Lesson' through the given link:
<https://youtu.be/gxtjzh4M7i4>

STEP 2: Read the text and underline important words and ideas. (Refer to the **dictionary** to find the meaning of difficult words.)

STEP 3: Watch a **pictorial summary** of the text through the given link:
<https://youtu.be/6LQdT8tbxA8>

STEP 4: Revise the text through the following notes.

BRIEF INTRODUCTION

'The last lesson' written by Alphonse Daudet narrates a story about the year 1870 when the Prussian forces under Bismarck attacked and captured France. The French districts of Alsace and Lorraine went into Prussian hands. The new Prussian rulers discontinued the teaching of French in the schools of these two districts. The French teachers were asked to leave. Now, M. Hamel could no longer stay in his school. Still, he gave lesson to his students with utmost devotion and sincerity as ever. One such student of M. Hamel, Franz who dreaded French class and M. Hamel's iron rod, came to the school that day thinking he would be punished as he had not learnt his lesson on participles. But on reaching the school, he found Hamel dressed in his fine Sunday clothes and the old people of the village sitting quietly on the back benches. That was the first day when he realized for the first time that how important French was for him, but it was his last lesson in French. The story depicts the pathos of the whole situation about how people feel when they don't learn their own language. It tells us about the significance of one's language in one's life for the very existence of a race and how important it is to safeguard it.

QUICK GIST

- 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 resists.
- Bulletin board: all bad news, lost battles, the drafts and orders of the commanding officers: wonders what it could be now.
- The changes he notices in the school:
 - Instead of noisy classrooms, everything is as quiet as Sunday morning.
 - The teacher does not scold him and tells him very kindly to go to his seat.
 - The teacher is dressed up 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.
- Hamel making the announcement that that would be the last French lesson; Franz realizes that, that was what was put up on the bulletin board.
- Franz:
 - Realizes that he does not know his own mother tongue.
 - Regrets why he had not taken his lessons seriously.
 - Realises the reason why teacher is dressed in his Sunday best and villagers sitting at the back.
- 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.
- M. Hamel advises: 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.
- Hamel overcome with emotions, cannot speak and writes on the blackboard "Long Live France".

THEME: Negligence of the people (children, parents, teacher) towards their own language. Proverb 'Familiarity breeds contempt' gets justified here. Feeling of linguistic chauvinism. Patriotism.

CHARACTERS:

MAIN:

FRANZ- The narrator of the story, Franz is a young school boy in the French region of Alsace-Lorraine in the nineteenth century. Franz is a dawdler and when it comes to schoolwork, he prefers to spend time in the woods over going to the class. He doesn't like learning his French grammar lessons and, when the story begins, is terrified that his negligence will be found out by his teacher, the stern M. Hamel. Franz comes to a new appreciation of his education, however, when Prussian authorities who have occupied his home region announce that school will no longer be taught in French, but in German. Upon hearing this news, Franz feels a great sense of remorse and regrets not taking his French education more seriously while he still had the chance.

M. HAMEL- The school master of a small village school in the French region of Alsace-Lorraine. M. Hamel is stern and intimidating to his pupils, among them the narrator of the story, Franz. He has been teaching at the school for forty years. In his classroom, he carries a ruler which he raps against his table threateningly. On the day the story is set, he is dressed in his best finery: a green coat, a shirt with frills, and a silk cap—clothes reserved for special occasions. Besides his frightening demeanor, M. Hamel also has a gentle side, revealed on the day he announces to those gathered in his classroom that Prussian authorities have banned the teaching of French in the schools of Alsace-Lorraine. On this day of the last lesson, M. Hamel not only reveals his empathy and kindness, but also his dignity and patriotism, lecturing the gathered crowd on the importance of protecting their language and culture in the face of foreign occupation.

OLD HAUSER- One of the elder villagers who gathers with the children in M. Hamel's classroom to hear the last lesson. He brings his old primer, an elementary reading textbook with him to the class, and uses it to help the youngest students read their letters. Like the other villagers and school children, including the story's narrator Franz, Hauser is devastated at the news that the Prussian authorities who have occupied the French region

of Alsace-Lorraine, where the village is located, have forbidden the teaching of French in schools. He cries as he helps the young children read and makes everyone else in the classroom want to cry and laugh at once.

PRUSSIAN SOLDIERS- Forces of the occupying Prussian power, which has invaded the French region of Alsace-Lorraine and claimed it for Prussia (then consisting of Germany, Poland, and parts of Austria). Franz passes the soldiers doing their drills as he hurries to the school on the morning of the last lesson. The end of the lesson is also marked by the trumpet call of the soldiers returning from their exercises.

MINOR:

WACHTER- A blacksmith in a village in the French region of Alsace-Lorraine. As he hurries to the school, the narrator, Franz, passes Wachter standing in front of the town hall bulletin-board. Wachter tells him not to go so fast, and Franz thinks the blacksmith is making fun of him.

STEP 5: ATTEMPT THE GIVEN QUESTIONS.

Q.s 1-13 in 30-40 words.

Q.s 14-16 in 120-150 words.

1. What was Franz expected to be prepared with for school that day?
2. What did Franz notice that was unusual about the school that day?
3. What had been put up on the bulletin-board?
4. What changes did the order from Berlin cause in school that day?
5. How did Franz's feelings about M. Hamel and school change?
6. What tempted Franz to stay away from school?
7. What was unusual about M Hamel's dress on his last day in the school?
8. "What a thunderclap these words were to me!" What were the words that shocked and surprised the narrator?
9. Why were the elders of the village sitting in the classroom?
10. What did M Hamel tell them about the French language? What did he ask them to do and why?

11. "This is your last French lesson." How did Franz react to this declaration of M. Hamel?
12. Who did M. Hamel blame for the neglect of learning on the part of boys like Franz?
13. How was the scene in the school in the morning of the last lesson different from that on the other days?
14. The people in this story suddenly realize how precious their language is to them. What illustrates this? Why does this happen?
15. Franz thinks, 'Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?' What could this mean? (There could be more than one answer.)
16. What changes did the narrator find in the school when the order from Berlin came?