

Short-Answer Questions

Q.1. How was the scene in the school, on the morning of the last lesson, different from that on other days?

[CBSE Delhi 2008] [CBSE (AI) 2015]

OR

How was M. Hamel's class different the day Franz went late to school?

[CBSE (AI) 2008]

Ans. Generally, there would be a great bustle, closing and shutting of desks, lessons repeated loudly in unison, rapping of the teachers' ruler on the table, all of which could be heard out in the street. But that everything was quite different. There was no noise. All were in their seats, Franz walked in late and M. Hamel let him calmly. He then noticed that his sir was dressed in his best clothes and there were the elders of the village seated in the class. It was a bit later the Franz realised why the day was different. It was their Last French lesson.

Q.2. How does M. Hamel pay a tribute to the French language?

[CBSE (AI) 2008]

OR

What did M. Hamel tell them about the French language? What did he ask them to do and why?

[CBSE Delhi 2011, 2013C]

Ans. M. Hamel went on to talk about French language. He told that it was the most beautiful language of the world. It was the clearest and the most logical of all languages. He asked the people to guard it among themselves and never forget it. As long as people 'hold fast to their language, they have the key to freedom'.

Q.3. One order from Berlin changed the scenerio of the school. Comment.

Ans. The order from Berlin led to the announcement that French would not be taught anymore, and instead, German would be taught by a new master. This was to be their last French lesson. The class was quiet as it was a Sunday morning with no hustle and bustle. The teacher, M. Hamel was patient and calm but inwardly emotional. He was in his special dress. The sad villagers were sitting on the last benches like the other students and the teacher explained the lesson very patiently.

Q.4. “What a thunderclap these words were to me!” Which were the words that shocked and surprised little Franz?

[CBSE Delhi 2010; (AI) 2011]

Ans. M. Hamel said, “My children, this is the last French lesson. I shall give you. The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the Schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new master will come tomorrow. This is your last French lesson. I want you to be attentive”. These words of his teacher were a thunderclap for Franz.

Q.5. Who did M. Hamel blame for the neglect of learning on the part of boys like Franz?

[CBSE Delhi 2011]

Ans. M. Hamel blamed the parents for the neglect of learning of French language as they engaged the boys in farm work. He also blamed himself to some extent as he too assigned the work of gardening to boys like Franz. He also gave them a holiday whenever he wanted to go fishing.

Q.6. “This is your last French lesson.” How did Franz react to this declaration of M. Hamel?

[CBSE Delhi 2010]

OR

How did Franz react to the declaration that it was their last French lesson?

[CBSE Delhi 2013]

Ans. The announcement made by M. Hamel left a great impact not only on Franz but all the other citizens. Franz was shocked to hear that M. Hamel was leaving and that it was his last lesson. He realised that he would not be able to read and speak his own mother tongue and regretted his lack of interest and carelessness.

Q.7. How did M. Hamel say farewell to his students and the people of the town?

[CBSE (AI) 2012]

Ans. M. Hamel looked very pale and tall when he stood up in his chair. All the students were quiet. The village people—old Hauser, the former Mayor, the former postmaster and several others were present in the school room. The teacher told the villagers that French was the most beautiful language in the world. He ended the lesson by writing Vive La France on the blackboard. He made a gesture with his hand to indicate that the school is dismissed and students could go home.

Q.8. Why had the bulletin board become a centre of attention during the last two years?

[CBSE Delhi 2010]

Ans. For the past two years, the news of lost battles, the draft and the orders of the commanding officer were displayed on the bulletin board. People thronged the bulletin board to read all this information. This was the reason why it had become a centre of attention.

Q.9. What was tempting Franz to keep away from school 'that morning'?

[CBSE Delhi 2010C]

Ans. Franz was supposed to learn participles as part of his schoolwork, which he had not done. Therefore he was afraid of being scolded by M. Hamel. Also he wanted to spend the day outdoors as it was warm and bright. The sight of the chirping birds and the Prussian soldiers drilling appealed to him more than the rules of participles.

Q.10. What was unusual about M. Hamel's dress and behaviour on the day of his last French lesson?

[CBSE Delhi 2010C]

Ans. Whenever Franz arrived late, he was met by an angry teacher. This time however, he was astounded when he was welcomed by a kind and polite M. Hamel. This was quite contrary to his nature. Moreover, he was dressed in his best clothes, a beautiful green coat, frilled shirt and an embroidered black silk cap, which he wore only on inspection and prize days.

Q.11. 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?

OR

Who occupied the back benches in the class room on the day of the last lesson? Why?

[CBSE Delhi 2015]

Ans. The back benches were occupied by the people of the village. Old Hansar, who had on his three Cornered hat, the former Mayor, the former post master and several other elders.

They had come to express their respect and regard for M. Hamel and sorrow that he had to leave from their midst.

Q.12. How did Franz perform when his turn came to recite? How did M. Hamel react?

Ans. Franz's name was called and he was asked to recite. Despite his best efforts, he got mixed up on the first words. He stood there holding on to his desk. His heart beat fast. And he did not dare to look up. M. Hamel told him in a polite tone that he would not

scold him as he was not the only one who neglected learning French. Many others in Alsace shared his fate because of procrastination. He said that every one had a great deal to reproach themselves with.

Q.13. “We’ve all a great deal to reproach ourselves with.” Why did M. Hamel blame the parents and himself too for not showing due attention and care to the learning of French?

Ans. M. Hamel did not hold Franz responsible for neglecting the learning of French. Most people of Alsace only pretended to be Frenchmen. But they could neither speak nor write their own language. The parents were not anxious to have them learn. They preferred to put children on a farm or at the mills to earn a little more money. He even held himself responsible as he often sent his students to water his flowers instead of learning their lessons. He also used to give a holiday whenever he wanted to go fishing.

Q.14. What does M. Hamel say about French language? What did he urge upon his students and villagers to do?

Ans. M. Hamel talked at length about the French language. He considered French to be the most beautiful language in the world. It was the clearest and most logical language too. He urged his students to guard it among themselves and reminded them never to forget it.

Q.15. How does M. Hamel prove to be an ideal teacher?

[CBSE Sample Paper 2015]

Ans. M. Hamel brings home the message of importance of love of mother tongue and patriotism. He explains things well and asks students to continue learning French even when he is gone. Hence he proves to be an ideal teacher.

Q.16. How was M. Hamel dressed differently that day? Why?

[CBSE Sample Paper 2015]

Ans. M. Hamel wore a green coat, frilled shirt and black silk cap to the class. He announced that it was their last lesson in French and that German will be taught in the school in the future. He was proud of being French and was upset by occupation of Alsace by Germans. He was very attached to the town, the school and its people.

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.