



#### LONG ANSWER TYPE QUESTIONS

Q1. Why was Franz scared that day? What did he see on his way to school and how did he get to his desk?

Ans: Franz was not good at learning. He would rather take the day off and waste time in searching birds' eggs or going sliding on the Saar. Franz was scared that day because M. Hamel had said that he would question them on participles. Franz did not know anything about participles.

He found that the day was warm and bright. The birds were chirping at the edge of the woods. The Prussian soldiers were drilling in the open fields. There was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board near the town-hall.

Franz found the school room unusually quiet. So, he had no option but to open the door and go in before everybody. He blushed and was frightened of the teacher. M. Hamel spoke very kindly to him and asked him to go to his place quickly. Franz jumped over the bench and sat down at his desk.

Q2. What order had been received from Berlin that day? What effect did it have on the life at school?

Ans: An order had been received from Berlin that only German would be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. This order had far-reaching effects on the life at school. M. Hamel, who had been teaching French at the village school for the last forty years would deliver his last lesson that day.

It was in honour of the last lesson that M. Hamel, the teacher had put on his best clothes. Old men of the village were sitting quietly at the back of the classroom. They were sad as well as sorry for they had not gone to school more. They had come to thank the master for his forty years of faithful service and to show respect for the country that was theirs no more.

The teacher addressed the students in a solemn and gentle tone. He asked them to be attentive and explained everything quite patiently. He appealed to them to preserve French among them. During slavery it would act as key to the prison. He felt so overwhelmed by emotion that he could not bid farewell properly.

Q3. What do you think is the theme of the story 'The Last Lesson'? What is the reason behind its universal appeal?

Ans: The theme of the story 'The Last Lesson' is linguistic chauvinism of the proud conquerors and the pain that is inflicted on the people of a territory by them by taking away the right to study or speak their own language and thus make them aliens in their own land of birth. The story has a sub-theme also. It highlights the attitudes of the students and teachers to learning and teaching.

Though the story is located in a particular village of Alsace district of France which had passed into Prussian hands, it has a universal appeal. It highlights the efforts of the victors to crush their victims—the vanquished people in all possible manner—materially, spiritually, mentally and emotionally. Taking away mother tongue from the people is the harshest punishment. The proper equation between student and teacher, his focused attention, helpful and encouraging attitude and kind treatment can encourage students to learn better.

Q4. Comment on the appropriateness of the title 'The Last Lesson'.

Ans: The story has an appropriate and suggestive title. It is the centre of attention throughout and the whole story revolves around it. The beginning of the story serves as preparation for it. The unusual quietness at school, presence of village elders and the teacher in his Sunday best dress—all point out to the unusual and unique occasion—the last lesson in French in a French village school in a district conquered by the Prussians. While delivering the last lesson, the teacher wants to transmit all his knowledge in one go. He explains everything with patience and the students as well as old villagers listen attentively.

For the narrator it is an unforgettable experience. “Ah, how well I remember it, that last lesson,” says he. Old Hauser is crying and his voice trembled with emotion. As the teacher is unable to express His emotions because of choked throat, he ends the lesson by writing ‘Wive La France’ on the blackboard. He makes a gesture with his hand to indicate that the school is dismissed and students can go home.

Q5. What impression do you form of M. Hamel on the basis of your study of the story ‘The Last Lesson’?

Ans: M. Hamel is an experienced teacher who has been teaching in that village 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 conquerors upsets him. He has to leave the place for ever and feels heart broken. He feels sad but exercises self-control. He has 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 analyse problems and deduce the reasons responsible for it. The problem for Alsace is that he (the district) 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 goodbye as his throat is choked. On the whole, he is a patriotic gentleman.

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