



THINK AS YOU READ

Q1. What was Franz expected to be prepared with for school that day?

Ans: That day Franz was expected to be prepared with participles because M. Hamel had said that he would question them on participles. Franz did not know anything about participles.

Q2. What did Franz notice that was unusual about the school that day?

Ans: Usually, when school began, there was a great bustle, which could be heard out in the street. But it was all very still that day. Everything was as quiet as Sunday morning. There was no opening or closing of desks. His classmates were already in their places. The teacher's great ruler instead of rapping on the table, was under M. Hamel's arm.

Q3. What had been put up on the bulletin-board?

Ans: For the last two years all the bad news had come from the bulletin-board. An order had come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The Germans had put up this notice on the bulletin-board.

THINK AS YOU READ

Q1. What changes did the order from Berlin cause in school that day?

Ans: M. Hamel had put on his best dress—his beautiful green coat, his frilled shirt and the little black silk cap, all embroidered. The whole school seemed so strange and solemn. On the back benches that were always empty, the elderly village people were sitting quietly like the kids.

Q2. How did Franz's feelings about M. Hamel and school change?

Ans: Franz came to know that it was the last lesson in French that M. Hamel would give them. From the next day they will be taught only German. Then he felt sorry for not learning his lessons properly. His books, which seemed a nuisance and a burden earlier were now old friends. His feelings about M. Hamel also changed. He forgot all about his ruler and how cranky he was.

UNDERSTANDING THE TEXT

Q1. The people in this story suddenly realise how precious their language is to them. What shows you this? Why does this happen?

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 to their prison. Then the people realised how precious their language was to them. This shows people's love for their own culture, traditions and country. Pride in one's language reflects pride in the motherland.

Q2. Franz thinks, "Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?" What could this mean? (There could be more than one answer.)

Ans: This comment of Franz shows a Frenchman's typical reaction

to the imposition of learning German, the language of the conquerors. Being deprived of the learning of mother tongue would mean cutting off all bonds with the motherland. Teaching the pigeons to sing in German indicates how far the Germans would go in their attempts of linguistic chauvinism.

TALKING ABOUT THE TEXT

Q1. "When a people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison."

Can you think of examples in history where a conquered people had their language taken away from them or had a language imposed on them?

Ans: Mother tongue helps a person to express his feelings and thoughts most lucidly and intimately. Conquerors try to subdue and control the people of the enslaved territory by enforcing many measures such as use of force to crush dissent and imposing their own language on them.

From time immemorial the victorious nations have imposed their own language on the conquered people and taken away their own language from them. The Romans conquered many parts of Europe and replaced the local languages by their own language—Latin. Later on Spanish, Portuguese, Italian and French developed from Latin. The Muslim invaders imposed Arabic and Persian in the countries of Asia overpowered by them. In many Arab countries the local religion and language have disappeared. In India, a new language Urdu developed from the mixture of Persian and Hindi.

Q2. What happens to a linguistic minority in a state? How do you think they can keep their language alive?

For example:

Punjabis in Bangalore

Tamilians in Mumbai

Kannadigas in Delhi

Gujaratis in Kolkata

Ans: The linguistic minority in any state is easily marked and faces the same discrimination as the religious, social or ethnic minorities. There is, however, a pronounced difference in the treatment meted out and the level of acceptance displayed by the majority community in that region/city. Some cities like Delhi, Mumbai are cosmopolitan in outlook.

The linguistic minority tries to preserve its identity through an intimate contact, interaction and preservation of their language in social get-togethers, family functions and festivals of their own region. Adherence to social customs and traditions in family gatherings/group meetings of women also promote the unity between members of the linguistic minority.

In short, they create a mini-Punjab in Bangalore, mini-Chennai in Mumbai, mini-Bangalore in Delhi and mini-Surat in Kolkata.

Q3. Is it possible to carry pride in one's language too far? Do you know what "linguistic chauvinism" means?

Ans: 'Linguistic chauvinism' means an aggressive and unreasonable belief that your own language is better than all others. This shows an excessive or prejudiced support for one's own language. Sometimes pride in one's own language goes too far and the linguistic enthusiasts can be easily identified by their extreme zeal for the preservation and spread of their language. In their enthusiasm, love and support for their own language, they tend to forget that other languages too have their own merits, long history of art, culture and literature behind them. Instead of bringing unity and winning over others as friends, having excessive pride in one's own language creates ill-will and disintegration. The stiff-resistance to the acceptance of Hindi as national language by the southern states of India is a direct outcome of the fear of being dominated by Hindi enthusiasts. The result is that 'One India' remains only a slogan.

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