

# THE LAST LESSON

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## ABOUT THE WRITER

Alphonse Daudet was a French novelist and story writer. The lesson has been written during France and Prussian war. In this story Alsace and Lorraine, the two districts of France had passed into Prussian hands. How it effects the life of a school child, let us read it.

**“I started for school very late that morning \_\_\_\_\_ respect for the country that was theirs no more.”**

The story tells us that on that very morning Franz started very late to his school and he had a fear of being scolded by his teacher M.Hamel. M.Hamel had said that he would question them (the class) on participles. The day was warm and so bright, in the open field back of the sawmill, the Prussian soldiers were drilling. But he did not pay any attention towards all these and made his way towards the school.

When he went past the town hall he noticed a crowd in front of the notice board. He thought that some bad news must be there. There was a great silence in the school. He thought that he would reach his desk without being seen, but on that day everything was still like Sunday's morning ; He had to open the door and go inside the classroom.

M.Hamel saw Franz and said kindly that he should go his place.The whole school was looking so strange and serious.The thing that surprised Franz most was to see the benches behind the class were packed by village people.Everybody looked sad.

**“ While I was wondering about it all,M.Hamel \_\_\_\_\_ a great deal to reproach ourselves with ”**

Story tells us that when Franz was wondering about all this,M.Hamel sat on his chair,and in a grave and gentle voice he said, “my children this is my last lesson,which i want to teach you .The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine.I want you to be very attentive.”

Franz hardly knew how to write French and he would never learn any more French now.He was not happy.When Franz knew that his teacher M.Hamel had also to leave from here and he would never see him again he forget about the ruler and his teacher's eccentricity.

M.Hamel had put on his the sunday clothes.The old men of the village were also sorry that they could not learn more and now they were showing their respect for their country.While Franz was thinking all this his name was called.He could not understand the difficult rules of participles,so he could not answer.His heart beating and not daring to look up. M.Hamel said that he would not scold him,but everyday we say that we have plenty of time to learn and keep it for tomorrow.It is a problem of Alsace that it leaves everything for tomorrow.

**“Your parents were not anxious enough to \_\_\_\_\_ school is dismissed you- may go .”**

M.Hamel said that your parents were not worried about your study. Then he went on the talk of French language and said that it was the most beautiful language in the world. We must guard it. When people are enslaved, if they stuck to their language they had the key to their prison, i.e., they could get freedom.

After grammar there was a lesson in writing. M.Hamel had new copies for them and the words written in a beautiful round hands - France, Alsace, France, Alsace were looking like the flags floating everywhere in the classroom, everyone set to work and it was quiet. On the roof the pigeons cooed very low and Franz thought in himself, "Will the Germans be able to sing the pigeons in German"?

M.Hamel was sitting motionless in his chair. He was only gazing things and it seemed that he wanted to fix in his mind how everything looked in that school room. He had his own garden outside the window. Everything was there in the same place. Seeing all this his heart broke.

After writing they had a lesson in History. At once the church clock struck twelve. M.Hamel stood up and wanted to say something but he could not go on. Then turning towards the blackboard he wrote

:- **"Vive La France"!** and said that the school was dismissed and they might go.

### **Comprehension question**

1. What was Franz expected to be prepared with for school that day?
2. What was unusual about the school that day?
3. What was written on the bulletin-board?
4. What changes did the order from Berlin cause in the school?
5. "Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons"? What could it mean?

**Ans1.** Franz expected that he would prepare the lesson on participle for school that day.

**Ans2.** On that day Franz noticed an unusual silence in and around the school.

**Ans3.** On the bulletin board it had been written that only German language would be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine.

**Ans5.** There was an unusual silence all around the school. Many village people sat on the back seats of the class of Franz.

**Ans6.** The Germans have imposed their own language on the French people, When Franz listens the pigeons cooing from the roof of the school room, he thought whether Germans will make the pigeons sing in German.