

GGPS, CHAS
eContent & Week 2 Assignment
English. Class XII

FLAMINGO Chapter 1: The Last Lesson

Background: The current story is set in the aftermath of the Franco Prussian war of 1870 that led to the annexation of French territories of Alsace and Lorraine by Germany and the eventual unification of Germany. It also led to the downfall of the second French Empire.

Theme: The chapter explores the idea of linguistic identity and the importance of language for people of a particular region or country. It also at one level discusses how language is an important part of an individual as well as a community at large. It also explores the idea of linguistic chauvinism through the character of M. Hamel.

Main Characters: a) Franz- He is a young boy living in the region of Alsace and Lorraine. He is a happy go lucky type of character who prefers bunking his classes and go for natural sight seeing. He ignores his studies and doesn't take them seriously. He is afraid of his teacher M. Hamel and has not finished his homework of learning participles. Till the day of the last lesson, he also doesn't realise the importance of learning his mother tongue French. He regrets not taking his learning seriously.

b) M. Hamel- He is the only teacher of the school of Alsace and Lorraine. He has worked in the same school for more than 40 years. He desperately loves his native language French and when order comes from Berlin that from now on only German and not French will be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. French was being replaced by German as the language of instruction. But he preferred to leave his job and school rather to continue teaching in German. He is the one who can be termed as a linguistic chauvinist. He also regrets failing as a teacher because even after 40 years of teaching most of the people living in the area do not know their own native language French properly. They cannot read or write grammatically correct French.

Chapter Summary: The story 'The Last Lesson' is set in the days of the Franco-Prussian war. France was defeated by Prussia and districts of Alsace and Lorraine had passed into Prussian hands. The orders came from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The story tells the effect of this transition on the people through the eyes of a young boy, Franz. The story describes what is just another ordinary day for Franz who started very late for school that morning. In fact, he was reluctant to go to school as he had not prepared his French lesson on participles and his teacher, M. Hamel, was going to conduct an oral test on the topic in the class. Initially, he thought of spending the bright warm day outdoors enjoying the chirping of birds and drilling of Prussian soldiers at the back of the sawmill. But finally, he decided to go to school.

On the way, Franz passed the town hall, where he saw a large crowd reading the bulletin board which had been a source of all bad news. Franz didn't stop there and rushed to the school.

When Franz arrived at the school, he found a strange quietness there. He found that his classmates were already seated in their places and the teacher had already started teaching. The back benches were occupied by the village elders who were grim and solemn. To his surprise, M. Hamel was in the formal ceremonial dress that he used to wear only on the inspection or prize distribution days. Franz

found M. Hamel to be kinder than usual. He didn't scold Franz for being late and allowed him to take his seat. Franz was shocked to get the news that it was going to be the last lesson in French and also the last lesson for M. Hamel and the new German teacher would take charge on the following day. He was full of regret for not learning his mother tongue and felt a sudden love for French. He even started liking M. Hamel and forgot all about his ruler and crankiness. When M. Hamel asked Franz to answer a question about participles, he was not able to answer. Even then, M. Hamel didn't scold him and remarked that the only trouble with people of Alsace was of putting off learning till the next day. He blamed parents for sending their children to earn money rather than to school. He also blamed himself for sending students to water his plants or to give them a holiday when he wanted to go fishing.

Hamel then talked of the French language, calling it the most beautiful language in the world. He told the class to keep their language close to their hearts to feel free and happy. As long as an enslaved people held fast to their language, it was as if they had the key to their prison. Their language could liberate them forever. As the church clock struck twelve, M. Hamel with a choked throat wrote on the blackboard *Vive La France!*, i.e. Long Live France and dismissed the class.

The story, written in historical background, is a beautiful depiction of the emotional bond of people with their mother tongue. It depicts the pathos of the situation that in order to conquer the minds of the people, it is not enough to win a country physically by force. In order to enslave a people completely, a conqueror needs to enslave their thoughts and make them devoid of their own mother tongue.

ASSIGNMENT

A.) Read the chapter and the e-content given above and answer the questions that follow:

1. Why was little Franz afraid to go to school?
2. What was the unusual sight seen by Franz as he reached school on the day of the last lesson?
3. M. Hamel says, "we all have a great deal to reproach ourselves with". What does he mean to say?
4. Why did all the villagers and old folks gather at the end of the classroom?
5. Which words were a thunderclap for little Franz? Why?
6. M. Hamel says, "you must guard your language because 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." Explain.
7. "Will they make them sing in German? Even the pigeons!" Who thought about these words? Why?
8. What did M. Hamel write on the board? What is its significance?
9. Do you think M. Hamel was a linguistic chauvinist? Discuss.
10. Language has the potential to unite as well as divide. It is also an effective medium of controlling people. Discuss with reference to the chapter 'The Last Lesson'.

B.) Study the sample letter of complaint given below and answer the question that follows:

You are Nikhil/ Nisha staying at 53, Banjara hills, Hyderabad. Last summer, you bought a colour television from the 'clear vision electronics' of Hyderabad. It has a warranty of 2 years. Now you discovered that the picture gets blurred every

now and then. Even the sound has become defective. Write a letter to the dealer complaining about the problem and requesting him to get the defect rectified. Also request him to replace it, if needed against the warranty that goes with it. (word limit:150-200 words)

53,Banjara Hills
Hyderabad

7 March,2020

The proprietor
Clear Vision Electronics
14, Palace Road
Hyderabad

Subject: Complaint against faulty LCD TV set

Dear Sir,

It was only last summer, 15 June 2019 to be precise that I bought a colour LCD TV from your reputed shop. Last week it started giving trouble. I thought that the sound problem was due to a weak signal and that it would pass, but it record with more frequency. When I try to adjust the norms and the settings of the television the picture got even more blood. Sometimes the colours also fade away.

I also complained in the customer care and they also sent an authorised systems engineer to my house in order to repair the faulty LCD TV set. But the engineer said that it was a manufacturing defect and could not be repaired even though the set is in the warranty period.

The set model number is CTV MS 21 and it's a Philips 43 inch LCD television and the invoice number is 1487/2019 dated 15 June 2019.since the TV set is within the guarantee period of 2 years you are requested to kindly get it replaced with another TV set of the same company as soon as possible.

Yours is a reputed shop and I hope that you will take into account the inconvenience caused to me and either replace or refund.

Hoping for an early favourable action.

Yours sincerely

Nisha/Nikhil

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Question: Naveen Chaudhary of 105, Bailey road, Patna bought a HP deskjet 200 printer from the computer centre, the sole dealer of HP at Ranchi, for use with his newly purchased personal computer, a month ago. Now we find that the print quality is poor and the ink nozzles of the print cartridge get frequently clogged. The printer has been given one year warranty against any technical defect. Write a letter as Navin Chaudhari to the dealer complaining about the same and requesting him to attend to it.
