Collegedunia NCERT Solutions

The Last Lesson NCERT Solutions: line-grounded answers for Alphonse Daudet's story from Flamingo (2026-27)

Chapter 1: Flamingo Prose: The Last Lesson

About this Chapter

The Last Lesson is Alphonse Daudet's short story set in Alsace during the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71. After France's defeat, Berlin orders that only German shall be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The narrator is Franz, a reluctant schoolboy; the teacher is M. Hamel, whose final French lesson is attended in silent grief by the village elders. These solutions ground every answer in specific incidents and lines from the story: the bulletin-board notice, M. Hamel's Sunday clothes, old Hauser's primer, the pigeons-and-German thought, and the closing "Vive La France!" on the blackboard.

Topics covered: Linguistic chauvinism vs mother-tongue patriotism • Regret over wasted time • Dignity of one's language • The community in the back row • Symbols (bulletin-board, flag-like copies, blackboard)

Author and source.
Alphonse Daudet (1840–1897), France; Flamingo, Prose Section.

Setting.
Alsace, 1870–71, after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War.

Central conflict.
A Berlin order ends French instruction in Alsace and Lorraine; the villagers attend M. Hamel's last French lesson.

Also see for this chapter: Revision Notes

Think as you read

Q 1.1 What was Franz expected to be prepared with for school that day?

SOLUTION

The opening paragraphs of the story tell us exactly what Franz had been told to revise. M. Hamel had said the previous day that he would *question the class on participles* that morning. A **participle** in French (as in English) is a verb form ending in particular suffixes (e.g. *-é*, *-ant*) that can act like an adjective or join with auxiliary verbs to make compound tenses. For a French schoolboy of Franz's age, the participle rule was a standard piece of grammar that had to be learned by heart.

> ☞ **Key lines**
> "M. Hamel had said that he would question us on participles, and I did not know the first word about them."

- Franz was expected to come to school knowing *the rule for participles* in French grammar. This was the day's set revision, announced in advance by M. Hamel.
- Franz confesses in the very next breath that he "did not know the first word about them". He had not studied the rule at home.
- Because of this unpreparedness, he is afraid of a scolding and even toys with running away: "For a moment I thought of running away and spending the day out of doors." The mild morning, the chirping birds and the Prussian soldiers drilling in the field behind the sawmill all tempt him more than the participle rule.
- Franz resists the temptation and "hurried off to school". The expectation, the unpreparedness and the guilt are all established in the very first paragraph, which is why this small detail of grammar becomes important later in the story.
- Daudet uses this homework expectation to set up the larger irony of the day: the boy who could not bother to learn his participles will, by lunch-time, be wishing he could "say that dreadful rule . . . all through, very loud and clear, and without one mistake".

> **Final Answer:** Franz was expected to come to school prepared with the rule for participles in French grammar, which M. Hamel had announced he would question the class on. Franz admits he "did not know the first word about them".

☞ Exam Tip

For a clean answer, name the grammar topic (participles), quote the key phrase ("question us on participles"), and add Franz's own admission that he did not know the rule. That triple makes the answer specific rather than vague.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Ananya Iyer, PhD English Literature, Jawaharlal Nehru University*

Quick reading. Notice that Daudet plants this tiny detail of homework on the very first page. Participles are a small piece of grammar, but in the story they become a doorway

into a much larger theme: the everyday French that Franz takes for granted is about to be taken away from him. The set rule on participles is therefore not just a homework instruction; it is the last piece of French grammar he will ever be examined on by M. Hamel.

- The expectation is named and dated in the opening lines: M. Hamel *had said* he would question the class on participles, and the present-tense narration places the promise on the morning the story opens.
- Read alongside Franz's reaction ("I thought of running away"), the participle rule stands for everything boring and skippable in childhood education. Daudet sets up Franz as a typical, indifferent learner before he transforms him.
- The sensory contrast is deliberate: warm morning, chirping birds, drilling Prussian soldiers (a sinister detail planted early) versus a single dry grammar rule. Daudet uses the contrast to dramatise Franz's choice between truancy and school.
- By the middle of the story Franz longs to be able to recite "that dreadful rule for the participle . . . very loud and clear, and without one mistake". The expectation set on page 1 returns as the wound on page 5. The detail does narrative work, not just realism.

Why this matters. For a Class 12 reader, this is also a quiet lesson on how short stories load small details with later meaning. The participle rule looks like a throwaway in paragraph one and becomes the engine of Franz's regret by paragraph twenty.

> **Final Answer:** Franz was expected to come to school prepared with the rule for participles. Daudet uses this small homework expectation as an early hook for the story's larger theme of language taken for granted, and Franz's failure to learn it becomes the source of his regret later in the same lesson.

Q 1.2 What did Franz notice that was unusual about the school that day?

SOLUTION

As Franz approaches the school he expects the familiar morning bustle: opening and closing of desks, lessons chanted in unison, M. Hamel's "great ruler rapping on the table." Instead, "it was all so still!" The unusual quietness is the first of a whole sequence of small, telling changes that signal something serious is happening. Daudet builds up the answer by accumulating details rather than naming the news outright; this gradual revelation is what we call **dramatic irony** from Franz's point of view: he registers the signs without understanding them yet.

☞ **How to read the scene**

List the unusual signs in the order Franz notices them. Each one is small, but together they tell the reader that this is no ordinary school morning.

- **Unusual silence.** "It was all so still!" Where Franz had expected the usual bustle of opening desks and unison recitation, the schoolroom was as quiet as "Sunday morning".
- **No scolding.** Although he came in late, M. Hamel spoke "very kindly" and not with the ruler under his arm, saying only, "Go to your place quickly, little Franz. We were beginning without you."
- **M. Hamel's Sunday clothes.** The teacher had on his "beautiful green coat, his frilled shirt, and the little black silk cap, all embroidered", clothes he wore only on inspection and prize days.
- **The village elders on the back benches.** The empty back benches were occupied by the village people: "old Hauser, with his three-cornered hat, the former mayor, the former postmaster, and several others". Hauser even held an old primer on his knees.
- **The grave mood.** The whole school looked "strange and solemn". "Everybody looked sad." These collective details show Franz that something out of the ordinary is in the air, even before M. Hamel announces the order from Berlin.

> **Final Answer:** Franz noticed five unusual things: the unnatural silence in the classroom, M. Hamel's gentle welcome instead of a scolding, his Sunday best of green coat and embroidered cap, the village elders sitting quietly on the usually empty back benches, and the grave, sad mood that hung over the whole school.

♥ **Why This Matters**

Daudet's choice to reveal the news through atmosphere first, and the announcement only afterwards, is what makes this scene memorable. The reader experiences the change the way Franz does: by sensing it, not by being told. Naming all five unusual details in your answer shows you have read the scene closely.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Arjun Mehra, MA English, Delhi University*

Structural observation. Daudet uses the gap between *habit* and *exception* to build meaning. Each unusual detail is set against an expected one: the bustle that should have been there but is missing, the ruler that should have been raised but is gentle, the everyday smock that has been replaced by Sunday best, the empty back benches now full of grey-haired villagers.

- The silence is set against Franz's earlier description of "opening and closing of desks,

lessons repeated in unison, very loud”. The contrast tells us the school has lost its normal noise of learning.

- M. Hamel’s gentleness is set against the iron ruler and the word “cranky” that Franz uses for him elsewhere. The same man who would have scolded yesterday is patient today.
- The Sunday-best clothes belong to “inspection and prize days”. By wearing them on an ordinary Friday, M. Hamel is treating the day as a ceremony: this is the chapter’s first signal that an ending is being marked.
- The presence of old Hauser, the former mayor, the former postmaster on the back benches is class-shifting. Adults usually associated with civic authority are now sitting on children’s benches, in homage to the teacher and the language.
- Together, these five departures from routine compose what the story will soon call “the last lesson”. The unusual details are the lesson before the lesson.

Why this matters. For an answer at the Class 12 level, the mark of a strong reader is to organise the details rather than listing them randomly. The five signs add up to a single statement: the school has been turned into a place of ceremony.

> **Final Answer:** The unusual signs Franz notices (silence, gentle welcome, Sunday clothes, elders on the back benches, the solemn mood) all break the school’s normal habits, and together they turn the ordinary Friday into a public farewell to the French language.

Q 1.3 What had been put up on the bulletin-board?

SOLUTION

The **bulletin-board** in front of the town hall is the place where official news, especially bad news, had been posted to the people of Alsace for the last two years of the Franco-Prussian War: “the lost battles, the draft, the orders of the commanding officer”. On the morning of the story a crowd has gathered there. Franz does not stop to read the notice; he only learns its content later, in school, from M. Hamel.

> ☞ **Key lines**
>
> “When I passed the town hall there was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board.” . . . “The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine.”

- The notice on the bulletin-board contained the order from Berlin that from now on *only German* would be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. French was to be banished from the curriculum of these two districts.

- This order is the cause of every unusual thing Franz notices in school that morning, including M. Hamel's Sunday clothes and the silent presence of the village elders. The bulletin-board notice is the off-stage event that has produced the on-stage atmosphere.
- Franz realises this only when M. Hamel announces, "The new master comes tomorrow. This is your last French lesson." At that point he thinks: "Oh, the wretches; that was what they had put up at the town-hall!" He connects the morning's crowd to the news he is now hearing.
- The bulletin-board is therefore not just a piece of street furniture in the story; it is the silent messenger of political defeat. For two years it has carried losses; now it carries the loss of language itself.

> **Final Answer:** The order from Berlin had been put up on the bulletin-board: that only German would from now on be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. This was the source of the morning's solemn mood and the reason for M. Hamel's last French lesson.

✗ Common Mistake

A common slip is to write only that "some bad news" was on the bulletin-board. Be specific: name the order, name the two districts (Alsace and Lorraine), and name the source (Berlin). Without those three, the answer loses precision.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Kavita Rao, MPhil Comparative Literature, Jadavpur University*

Strategic angle. Notice how Daudet uses the bulletin-board as a recurring sign of foreign rule. The same board has carried "the lost battles, the draft, the orders of the commanding officer" for two years. Each of these notices took something material from the people of Alsace: their soldiers, their sons, their freedoms. The new notice takes their language. Daudet is suggesting that the loss of a mother tongue is comparable in scale to the loss of a war.

- The board's earlier notices had been military and administrative. The new notice extends the same logic to culture and identity: language is now being treated as another piece of territory to be governed.
- Franz's chosen word for the authors of the order, "the wretches", is the voice of a boy who has just understood what the adults already know. The bulletin-board completes Franz's political education in a single moment.
- The board is also a place of *public* announcement: the order is not whispered to the school, it is posted for all of Alsace. The story therefore makes the loss collective, not just personal to the schoolroom.

- For a Class 12 reader, the bulletin-board is a useful image of how authoritarian rule communicates: not through speech but through fixed text, posted from above and read from below.

Why this matters. The bulletin-board scene helps explain why M. Hamel calls this lesson *the last*: it is not a private decision of the school, it is a public order, posted in writing, backed by the new authority. The classroom has no choice but to obey.

> **Final Answer:** What had been put up on the bulletin-board was the Berlin order that only German would from now on be taught in Alsace and Lorraine. As the latest in a two-year series of bad-news notices, it framed language itself as a piece of conquered territory.

Q 1.4 What changes did the order from Berlin cause in school that day?

SOLUTION

The order from Berlin replaces French with German as the medium of instruction in Alsace and Lorraine. M. Hamel announces this in school: "This is the last lesson I shall give you . . . The new master comes tomorrow. This is your last French lesson." The order produces a chain of changes inside the schoolroom that morning, each visible and concrete.

> ☞ **Group the changes**
>
> Sort the changes into three buckets: changes in the teacher, changes in the students, and changes in the audience. This keeps your answer organised.

- **Change in the teacher.** M. Hamel wears his Sunday best ("beautiful green coat, frilled shirt, embroidered black silk cap") instead of his usual smock. He speaks "in the same grave and gentle tone", not in his cranky scolding voice. He delivers the lesson with unusual patience, "as if he wanted to give us all he knew before going away, and to put it all into our heads at one stroke".
- **Change in M. Hamel's content.** He turns from participles to a passionate defence of the French language, "the most beautiful language in the world: the clearest, the most logical", and warns that "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".
- **Change in the students.** The class is unnaturally quiet. The students apply themselves to writing as never before: "You ought to have seen how every one set to work, and how quiet it was! The only sound was the scratching of the pens over the paper." Even when beetles fly in, nobody looks up. Franz himself, who normally hated French, listens with new attention and is amazed at how easy the lesson seems.

- **Change in the audience.** The back benches, "that were always empty", are filled with village people: old Hauser, the former mayor, the former postmaster, and others. Old Hauser holds a primer on his knees and spells out the letters along with the children, his voice trembling with emotion. The school has become a small public ceremony.
- **Change in the closing.** The order from Berlin even changes how the lesson ends. Unable to speak at the end, M. Hamel turns to the blackboard, writes "Vive La France!" with all his strength, and dismisses the class with a gesture: "School is dismissed: you may go." A normal school day would have ended with the ringing of a bell, not with a written cry of patriotism.

> **Final Answer:** The order from Berlin turned an ordinary Friday into a farewell ceremony: M. Hamel wore Sunday clothes and spoke gently about the beauty of French, the students applied themselves with new seriousness, the village elders sat on the back benches in silent support, old Hauser spelled out letters from a primer, and M. Hamel ended the lesson by writing "Vive La France!" on the blackboard and dismissing the class with a gesture.

☞ Exam Tip

A high-scoring answer here names at least four concrete changes (teacher's clothes, gentle tone, presence of elders, change in content, blackboard ending) rather than giving a single vague sentence about "everyone being sad".

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Prof Rohit Banerjee, MA English, University of Hyderabad*

Strategic angle. Read the changes as a transformation of a classroom into a civic space. Before the order, the school was a routine site of grammar drills and ruler-rapping; after the order, it becomes the village's public mourning hall for a lost language.

- The change in dress (smock to Sunday best) signals a change in genre: M. Hamel is no longer a teacher running an ordinary lesson but a celebrant conducting a small civic rite.
- The change in tone (cranky to grave-and-gentle) signals a change in purpose: discipline gives way to transmission. M. Hamel speaks not to correct but to bequeath.
- The change in seating (empty back benches to elders in attendance) signals a change in community: the school is no longer just for children. It now belongs to the whole village, because the loss is the whole village's loss.
- The change in content (from participles to the philosophy of language) signals a change in stakes: M. Hamel is no longer asking students to memorise a rule, he is asking them to remember a tongue.
- The change in the ending (a written "Vive La France!" instead of a routine dismissal)

signals a change in register: an ordinary school day has been raised to the pitch of a national farewell.

Why this matters. For an exam answer, the deeper marking point is to notice that each change has the same direction: from the private and routine to the public and ceremonial. Once you see this shape, every detail in the answer falls into place. The marker is looking for a student who can group details by theme rather than list them at random; once grouped, the answer also becomes much easier to remember in the exam hall.
A useful test: take any single detail from the morning (the green coat, the silent students, Hauser's primer, the chalked "Vive La France!", the gesture-dismissal at the end) and ask, "which direction does this push the day?" In every case the answer is the same: from school to ceremony, from private to public, from routine to farewell. This consistency is what makes the chapter feel like one event rather than a bundle of unrelated changes.

> **Final Answer:** The Berlin order turned the schoolroom from a routine classroom into a public ceremony of farewell: changes in dress, tone, content, audience and ending all moved the day from private discipline to collective mourning for the French language. Every single change pushes in the same direction, which is what makes the morning read as one coordinated event.

Q 1.5 How did Franz's feelings about M. Hamel and school change?

SOLUTION

Before the announcement of the last lesson, Franz is the typical reluctant schoolboy: he is afraid of M. Hamel's ruler, he calls him "cranky", and he treats his French books as a "nuisance" and "so heavy to carry". After M. Hamel speaks, all of these feelings reverse. The change is not gradual; it happens in the space of a few minutes, the moment Franz realises that this is the last French lesson he will ever have.

☞ **Before and after**

Before: "thought of running away"; "how cranky he was"; "books . . . a nuisance . . . so heavy to carry".
After: "my last French lesson!"; "old friends now that I couldn't give up"; "I never saw him look so tall".

- **Feelings about M. Hamel reverse from fear to affection.** Where Franz had earlier been "in great dread of a scolding" and had wanted to escape "the rule for participles, but I had the strength to resist", he now forgets "all about his ruler and how cranky he was". When M. Hamel stands up at the end, pale and choked with emotion, Franz

says: “I never saw him look so tall.” The cranky teacher has become a dignified, even heroic, figure in his eyes.

- **Feelings about school reverse from boredom to longing.** The boy who had wanted to “spend the day out of doors” now wishes he could “say that dreadful rule for the participle all through, very loud and clear, and without one mistake”. The same grammar he had skipped that morning has become something he aches to know.
- **Feelings about books reverse from nuisance to friendship.** “My books, that had seemed such a nuisance a while ago, so heavy to carry, my grammar, and my history of the saints, were old friends now that I couldn’t give up.” The objects of school have changed from burdens to companions.
- **Feelings about the elders shift from puzzlement to understanding.** At first Franz cannot see why old Hauser, the former mayor and others are sitting on the back benches. After M. Hamel speaks he understands: “it was because they were sorry, too, that they had not gone to school more.” He shares their regret.
- **Feelings about French itself become urgent.** As M. Hamel reads the grammar lesson, Franz is amazed at how well he understands it: “All he said seemed so easy, so easy!” The subject he had thought difficult turns out to be easy precisely because he is now listening for the first time.

> **Final Answer:** Franz’s feelings about M. Hamel change from fear and irritation (“how cranky he was”) to respect and tenderness (“I never saw him look so tall”), and his feelings about school change from boredom (“I thought of running away”) to deep longing for the very lessons (“my books ... were old friends”) he had earlier neglected. The trigger for every change is the news that this is his last French lesson.

♥ Why This Matters

For Class 12 readers, this question is asking about a small but profound idea: things we take for granted often become precious only when we are about to lose them. Frame the change of feeling in those terms and the answer becomes more than a list.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION *: Dr Meenakshi Pillai, PhD Postcolonial Studies, University of Delhi*

Quick reading. Daudet stages Franz’s change of feeling as a sequence of small reversals, each tied to a concrete object or person. The technique lets the reader map the inner change against visible items, which is far more effective than telling us directly that Franz has matured.

- *Ruler* (fear) becomes *tall figure* (respect). The same M. Hamel whose “terrible iron ruler under his arm” used to alarm Franz is now the man who looks taller than ever

before.

- *Participle rule* (boredom) becomes *participle rule* (regret). The grammar that he could not bear to learn is the very grammar he longs to recite "very loud and clear, and without one mistake".
- *Books as nuisance* (burden) becomes *books as old friends* (companions). The same objects gain weight by being threatened with departure.
- *Empty back benches* (puzzle) becomes *benches full of grieving elders* (understanding). Franz now reads the gathering as a tribute to "forty years of faithful service" and to "the country that was theirs no more".
- *The classroom* (a place to be avoided) becomes *a place of unprecedented attention* ("I think, too, that I had never listened so carefully"). Franz turns from a runaway into a model student in a single morning.

Why this matters. The story uses Franz as a stand-in for any young reader who imagines that mother tongue, school and teacher are permanent. The lesson Daudet teaches through Franz's change of feeling is that they are not permanent, and that the proper response to that fact is gratitude and care, not boredom.

A practical reading tip for the exam hall: when you write about Franz's transformation, do not say only that he "became sad". Say what was reversed (fear to respect, boredom to longing, nuisance to friend) and quote the line that proves each reversal. The change is mapped onto concrete objects (ruler, participle rule, books, back benches, classroom itself), and naming those objects is what turns a vague answer into a specific one. The strongest answers also notice that the reversal is set off by a single piece of news, M. Hamel's announcement, so the whole transformation happens inside the duration of one school morning.

> **Final Answer:** Franz's feelings reverse along every axis: from fear of M. Hamel to respect for him, from boredom with French to longing for it, from impatience with books to affection for them, and from puzzlement at the elders to shared regret. Daudet uses these reversals, all triggered by a single announcement, to dramatise a universal moral: we discover the worth of what we have only when we are about to lose it.

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Understanding the text

Q 1.6 The people in this story suddenly realise how precious their language is to them. What shows you this? Why does this happen?

SOLUTION

The story shows the village's sudden valuation of French through both **action** (what the characters do) and **utterance** (what M. Hamel says aloud). The cause is also clearly named in the plot: the Berlin order to replace French with German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. Loss, threatened or already realised, sharpens value.

☞ **How to organise the answer**

First list the *evidence* that shows the new valuation, then state the *cause*. The question has two halves; mark them with "What shows you this" and "Why this happens".

- **The elders sit in the back row.** Old Hauser, the former mayor, the former postmaster and several others attend a school lesson they had stopped attending decades earlier. They have come to honour "forty years of faithful service" and to be present at the death of their language in the classroom.
- **Old Hauser spells along with the children.** Holding his thumbed-edged primer with both hands, he "spelled the letters with them". His voice trembles with emotion. An old man learning his ABCs is the sharpest image of how precious every syllable of French has suddenly become.
- **M. Hamel praises the language explicitly.** He calls French "the most beautiful language in the world: the clearest, the most logical", and says that as long as a conquered people "hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison". He is naming the value the story is dramatising.
- **Franz and his classmates listen as never before.** "I think, too, that I had never listened so carefully"; the room is so quiet that "the only sound was the scratching of the pens over the paper" as the students copy "France, Alsace, France, Alsace" in beautiful round hand. Even the smallest children trace their fish-hooks "as if that was French, too".
- **M. Hamel writes "Vive La France!".** At the striking of the church-clock he turns to the blackboard and writes the patriotic phrase "as large as he could", bearing on the chalk "with all his might". The act ends the lesson with a public declaration that the language is worth defending even when it has been outlawed.
- **The cause of the sudden valuation.** All this happens because the people have just been told they can no longer teach or be taught in French. The Berlin order makes their language a threatened thing, and a threatened thing becomes a precious thing.

Final Answer: The sudden valuation is shown by the elders attending the class, old Hauser spelling alongside the children, M. Hamel's open praise of French as "the most beautiful language in the world", the unusual silence and focus of the students, and the chalked "Vive La France!" on the blackboard. The cause is plainly stated in the plot: the Berlin order has decreed that French can no longer be taught in Alsace and Lorraine, and the threat of losing the language makes everyone realise its worth.

✗ Common Mistake

A weak answer says only that the people "were sad". Sadness is the symptom, not the evidence. Quote at least two specific things (Hauser spelling, "Vive La France!", or M. Hamel's praise) so the realisation has texture.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION : *Dr Saira Khan, PhD South Asian Studies, Aligarh Muslim University*

Strategic angle. The valuation of language is a recurring theme in literature of colonial and post-colonial conquest. Daudet's story is one of the earliest, simplest dramatisations of an idea that later writers have spent careers on: that language carries identity, history and freedom, and that taking it away is a kind of defeat that words like "conquest" cannot quite express.

- The story dramatises value through *loss*, not abundance. We learn how precious French is to Alsace only when Alsace is told it can no longer have it. Daudet uses scarcity as the lens through which value becomes visible.
- The value is recognised *across generations*. Old Hauser, M. Hamel and Franz, three age groups, all show it in the same lesson. The story is therefore not about a single character's awakening but a community's.
- The value is recognised through both *speech and act*. M. Hamel names the worth of French in words; the elders and students enact it through attendance, silence and effort. Daudet uses both channels so the reader cannot mistake the point.
- The cause is political (the Berlin order), but the response is personal and civic, not military. The story therefore proposes that a language under threat is best defended by love and study, not by force.
- For a Class 12 reader, the question maps onto contemporary debates: what happens to minority languages in any modern nation? The lesson of Alsace is that the time to value a language is before it is threatened, not only after.

Why this matters. The story is studied in school precisely because it makes the abstract idea ("language is identity") visible as a series of concrete actions. The actions are the answer; the ideology is only their summary.

Final Answer: The story shows the village's new valuation of French through Hauser's primer, M. Hamel's open praise, the silent attentive class and the chalked "Vive La France!". The cause is the Berlin order that threatens to remove French from school: threat sharpens value. Daudet uses this moment of awakening to make the larger point that mother tongue is best defended not in crisis but in calm, and not by individuals alone but by a whole community.

Q 1.7 **Franz thinks, "Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?" What could this mean?**

SOLUTION

The question is asked of Franz himself, but the line carries several layers of meaning that exam answers are expected to draw out. The textbook itself notes that "there could be more than one answer." The line works at three levels: literal, ironic and symbolic. Reading all three is what a Class 12 answer should do.

☞ **How to read the line**

Treat the pigeons as both real birds in M. Hamel's school and as a symbol. The literal absurdity of teaching pigeons German is what makes the symbolic charge possible.

- **Literal-absurd layer.** Pigeons coo in their own natural sound; no human authority can change that. By imagining the Prussians trying to make pigeons coo in German, Franz is showing the limit of conquest. There are things in nature that no order from Berlin can touch.
- **Ironic-protest layer.** The thought is a quiet sarcasm at the new rulers. If they can decree that French children be taught only in German, perhaps next they will decree that pigeons coo in German too. Franz expresses, in a child's voice, the ridiculousness of imposing a language by command.
- **Symbolic-freedom layer.** Pigeons in the story sit on the roof of the school and "cooed very low". They are an image of innocent, free, unconquered life that goes on above the human conflict. To imagine forcing them to sing in German is to imagine extending the conquest into a part of life that should stay free. The line therefore stands for the natural resistance of mother tongue: like a pigeon's coo, a child's first language is not learned from rulers and cannot be replaced by their orders.
- **Layer of regret-for-the-natural-self.** On the morning of the story, the very same pigeons ("the birds were chirping at the edge of the woods") had tempted Franz to skip school. Now, sitting in his last French lesson, he wonders whether even those free birds will be next on the list. The line links Franz's earlier wish for freedom (to play outside) with his new fear that no part of his life in Alsace is safe.

- **Layer of larger linguistic chauvinism.** Read against the chapter's theme, the line is Daudet's quiet attack on **linguistic chauvinism**, the belief that one language should be imposed on all peoples. The pigeons stand for everything that cannot be coerced: nature, intuition, the unconscious first language of a people.

> **Final Answer:** Franz's question can mean several things at once. Literally, it points to the absurdity of trying to make even birds obey a language order. Ironically, it mocks the Prussian decree by carrying its logic to a ridiculous extreme. Symbolically, the pigeons stand for everything that no conqueror can change: the free, natural, mother-tongue parts of life. The line therefore captures both a child's protest and Daudet's deeper critique of linguistic chauvinism.

☞ Exam Tip

When the textbook itself says "there could be more than one answer", examiners reward students who actually offer more than one. Two layered interpretations beat one neat one. Always say so explicitly: "This line can be read in two ways. First . . . Secondly . . ."

EXPERT'S SOLUTION : *Prof Ishaan Mukherjee, MA English, Presidency University Kolkata*

Quick reading. Daudet uses Franz's childlike question to state a large political idea without sounding political. A child asking about pigeons sounds harmless; the same idea spoken by an adult would sound seditious. The narrative voice is therefore doing strategic work.

- The line works as *reductio ad absurdum*: if a language can be decreed for human schools, can it be decreed for the birds too? By extending the new rule to a point where everyone can see the absurdity, Franz exposes the rule's unnaturalness.
- The line works as a marker of *the limits of empire*. Pigeons stand for the parts of life that lie outside human decree: nature, instinct, mother tongue. Daudet is reminding the reader that conquest is never complete; something always escapes.
- The line also works as *the child's defence*. Franz cannot fight Prussian soldiers, but he can ask a question that they cannot answer. A child's question is the smallest form of resistance available to him, and the story respects it as such.
- For a Class 12 reader, the line connects to debates about mother-tongue education in any modern, multilingual society. It asks: how much of a person's inner life can a government legislate? Daudet's answer, delivered through a small boy and a few birds, is: less than it thinks.

Why this matters. The strength of the line is that it does not preach. A short rhetorical question, in a child's voice, makes a case against linguistic chauvinism that pages of editorial would struggle to make. This economy is part of why the story endures and

why the Class 12 syllabus keeps it on the prescribed list year after year. Notice also that the line costs the reader nothing in attention: a single sentence about birds carries the same political weight as a full essay on language rights, which is why it gets quoted in classrooms long after the rest of the page has been forgotten.

> **Final Answer:** Franz's question about the pigeons mocks the Prussian language order by extending it to a point of obvious absurdity, marks the limits of any conquest by pointing to a part of life that cannot be decreed, and offers a child-sized form of resistance: asking a question that the conqueror cannot answer. In a single sentence Daudet condenses an entire critique of linguistic chauvinism.

Talking about the text

Q 1.8 **"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?**

SOLUTION

M. Hamel's line treats language as the **key to the prison** of conquest: as long as a defeated people keeps speaking its own tongue, it can still reach the door of its freedom. Conquerors who understand this often try to remove or replace the language of the conquered. History offers many examples; Class 12 students are expected to draw on world history and on India.

> ☞ **Pick four, develop briefly**
> Avoid a long list of bare names. Pick three or four examples and say, in a sentence or two each, what was taken away and how the people held on.

- **Alsace and Lorraine (the story itself), 1870–71.** After Prussia's victory in the Franco-Prussian War, French was forbidden in the schools of the two annexed districts. Daudet's story is itself a record of this attempt.
- **The British in India, 19th and 20th centuries.** English replaced Persian as the official and higher-education language after 1835 (Macaulay's "Minute on Indian Education"). Vernacular languages remained in homes and in literature, and writers like Bankim, Tagore and Premchand used the mother tongue to imagine a free India. The Bhasha Andolan in Bengal and the demand for linguistic states after Independence both grew from this experience.
- **The Bengali Language Movement, 1952 (East Pakistan).** When the central

government of Pakistan tried to make Urdu the sole official language, students of Dhaka University protested. Several were shot dead on 21 February 1952. Bengali was eventually recognised as a state language; the same date is now observed as *International Mother Language Day* by UNESCO. The day's existence is itself a global acknowledgement of M. Hamel's argument.

- **Indigenous languages of the Americas and Australia.** Children of First Nations and Aboriginal communities were often punished in residential schools (Canada, USA, Australia) for speaking their mother tongues. Generations of language loss followed. Recent decades have seen revival efforts: language nests, immersion schools, dictionaries being rebuilt.
- **Irish Gaelic under British rule.** For centuries English was the official language and Gaelic the language of the kitchen and the song. The Gaelic League (founded 1893) and the Irish Free State after 1922 worked to revive Irish in school and public life. Today Irish is a co-official language of Ireland, though English remains dominant in daily use.
- **Welsh under English rule.** Welsh-speaking schoolchildren in the 19th century were forced to wear the "Welsh Not", a wooden tag, if they were caught speaking Welsh. The Welsh Language Act of 1993 and the steady growth of Welsh-medium schools have since reversed the decline.

> **Final Answer:** History offers many parallels to M. Hamel's line. The Prussian ban on French in Alsace-Lorraine after 1871, the British imposition of English on India through Macaulay's 1835 decision, the Bengali Language Movement of 1952 in East Pakistan, the forbidding of mother tongues to Indigenous children in North American and Australian residential schools, and the suppression of Irish and Welsh under English rule all show conquered peoples being denied or imposed on linguistically, and all show how communities that "held fast" to their tongue, through poetry, song, schooling or protest, eventually unlocked their prison.

♥ Why This Matters

This question is also asking students to extend the story beyond 1870. Show that you have read it as more than a French period piece: it is a template for understanding language politics today.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION : *Dr Vikram Sundaram, PhD Linguistics, English and Foreign Languages University*

Strategic angle. The story's line about "the key to the prison" has been treated, in postcolonial criticism, as one of the clearest early statements of what later thinkers

(Frantz Fanon, Ngugi wa Thiong'o) call **linguistic decolonisation**: the idea that political freedom is incomplete without the freedom to think, write and teach in one's own tongue.

- In British India, the gap between official English and spoken vernaculars was closed by writers who insisted on the mother tongue. Premchand wrote in Hindi-Urdu, Tagore in Bengali, Subramania Bharati in Tamil. Each of these bodies of work is, in M. Hamel's sense, a key being sharpened against the prison.
- The Bengali Language Movement in East Pakistan (1948, 1952) shows what happens when the imposition is internal rather than colonial: even an independent state can become a coloniser to its own minorities. The students of Dhaka University were shot for the same right that M. Hamel was defending in chalk.
- The Irish, Welsh and Scots Gaelic experiences in the United Kingdom show that loss of language can take centuries to reverse, and that schools (M. Hamel's site of struggle) remain the central battlefield. Welsh-medium and Gaelic- medium schools today are doing in policy what M. Hamel was doing in spirit on his last day.
- Indigenous language loss in North America and Australia shows the most violent form of linguistic chauvinism: not just the removal of a language from school but the punishment of children for speaking it. Revival movements today, often led by elders teaching small children, mirror old Hauser spelling alongside Franz: the oldest and the youngest, together, reclaiming the tongue.
- Most relevant to a Class 12 student in India: the country's own arrangement of *linguistic states* after 1956 was partly an attempt to give every major mother tongue a public, administrative home. The Three-Language Formula and the Eighth Schedule of the Constitution are the institutional descendants of M. Hamel's argument.

Why this matters. The line is short but the question opens out into world history. The strongest answers tie at least one international example (Bengali, Irish, Indigenous) to at least one Indian one (Macaulay's Minute, the linguistic states, the Eighth Schedule), so the reader can see the line working in more than one context.

> **Final Answer:** From Alsace-Lorraine in 1871 to East Pakistan in 1952, from Macaulay's India to Indigenous North America, conquered peoples have repeatedly had their languages forbidden or replaced. The story's "key to the prison" line is therefore not just a piece of period sentiment but a working principle of linguistic decolonisation, still visible today in mother-tongue education policies in India and revival movements abroad.

Q 1.9 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.

SOLUTION

A **linguistic minority** is a community that speaks a language different from the dominant or official language of the state it lives in. India's Constitution recognises linguistic minorities under Article 29 (right of any section of citizens to conserve its language) and Article 350A (instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage for children of linguistic minorities). The four examples in the textbook (Punjabis in Bangalore, Tamilians in Mumbai, Kannadigas in Delhi, Gujaratis in Kolkata) are all internal migrant communities living among majority speakers of a different state language.

☞ **Two halves of the question**

The first half asks *what happens* (a description of pressures); the second asks *what they can do* (a description of strategies). Keep the two halves clearly separated.

- **What happens to a linguistic minority: pressure to shift.** Daily life (markets, schools, public signage, official forms, friends at work) is conducted in the host state's language. Children often pick up the host language before the mother tongue, especially if school is in the host language. The mother tongue gradually retreats into the home and into festivals.
- **What happens: identity stress.** Minorities can feel that the public world does not reflect them. They may also face the opposite pressure of being treated as outsiders because of their accent or surname. Both pressures push people either to assimilate completely or to retreat into a closed community.
- **What happens: generational loss.** The first generation speaks the mother tongue fully; the second mixes it with the host language; the third may understand it but speak only the host tongue. This pattern is documented for many minority communities worldwide.
- **How they can keep the language alive: family.** Speak the mother tongue at home consistently. Read aloud from books, songs, religious texts and newspapers in the mother tongue. Maintain the language with grandparents over phone or video.
- **How they can keep the language alive: community.** Form associations (Tamil Sangam, Punjabi Bhavan, Gujarati Samaj, Kannada Sangha) that run weekend classes, libraries, cultural evenings, festivals and theatre. These are the modern equivalents of old Hauser's primer.
- **How they can keep the language alive: education.** Demand mother-tongue instruction at the primary stage (Article 350A), enrol children in language-medium schools or supplement school with after-hours classes. Use the Constitution's Eighth Schedule recognition where applicable.
- **How they can keep the language alive: media and digital tools.** Watch films, news and shows in the mother tongue; read books and journals; use Unicode keyboards and social media in the script of the mother tongue. Modern media make minority

languages portable in a way that was impossible a century ago.

- **How they can keep the language alive: bilingual confidence.** Treat the mother tongue and the host language as partners, not rivals. A child who speaks Tamil at home in Mumbai can become fully bilingual; the mother tongue does not need to be defended by refusing to learn Marathi. The story's point is that the mother tongue should be cherished, not that the host language should be resented.

> **Final Answer:** A linguistic minority typically faces gradual pressure to shift to the host state's language, with the mother tongue retreating to the home over generations. To keep their language alive, Punjabis in Bangalore, Tamilians in Mumbai and similar groups can speak it consistently at home, organise community associations and weekend classes, demand mother-tongue schooling under Article 350A, use media and digital tools in the language, and treat bilingualism as strength rather than threat.

☞ Exam Tip

For a high-mark answer, name at least one Constitutional provision (Article 29 or 350A) and at least one realistic community strategy (Sangha, weekend school, mother-tongue cinema). Specificity beats sentiment here.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Priya Krishnan, MA Sociolinguistics, Jamia Millia Islamia*

Strategic angle. The textbook's four examples (Punjabis in Bangalore, Tamilians in Mumbai, Kannadigas in Delhi, Gujaratis in Kolkata) are deliberately drawn from across India to show that the linguistic-minority experience is not unique to any one community. Every Indian city is a meeting point of mother tongues, and every mother tongue, in some city, is a minority tongue.

- Indian cities are linguistic mosaics. Bangalore is largely Kannada-speaking, but its IT industry has brought in Punjabis, Tamilians, Bengalis, Malayalis and others. Each of these communities is, in Bangalore, in M. Hamel's position: speaking a language that is not the public default.
- The pressures these minorities face are not as dramatic as Alsace's Berlin order but they are real: school choices, peer pressure, signage, employment. Daudet's story is useful because it makes visible the slow version of the process: when public space stops carrying your language, the language quietly contracts.
- The remedies are also slower but real. India's Constitution protects linguistic minorities through Articles 29, 30 and 350A. Communities supplement constitutional protection with cultural associations: Mumbai's Tamil Sangam, Delhi's Karnataka Sangha, Kolkata's Gujarati Samaj, Bangalore's Punjabi Bhavan. These institutions

function like the village elders in Daudet's story: keepers of language across generations.

- Digital media has changed the picture for the better. Mother-tongue content (films, OTT series, YouTube, podcasts, social media in script) is more accessible than ever; a Tamilian family in Mumbai can keep the language at home with a smartphone in a way that was impossible in 1870 or in 1970.
- A Class 12 student's answer should also note that the goal is not language purity but language survival. Bilingual or trilingual confidence (mother tongue + host language + English/Hindi) is the realistic Indian solution. The mother tongue does not have to win; it only has to live.

Why this matters. The question links the Alsace story to the everyday life of an Indian city. Without that link, the chapter becomes a period piece; with it, M. Hamel's chalked "Vive La France!" becomes the same gesture as a grandmother insisting that her grandchild speak Tamil at the dining table in Mumbai.

> **Final Answer:** Linguistic minorities in Indian cities live under steady, non-dramatic pressure to shift to the host language, with the mother tongue retreating across generations. They keep their language alive through home use, community Sanghas, mother-tongue schooling under Constitutional protections, and modern media. The aim is not isolation but a confident bilingualism that honours both the host language and the mother tongue.

Q 1.10 **Is it possible to carry pride in one's language too far? Do you know what 'linguistic chauvinism' means?**

SOLUTION

Linguistic chauvinism is the belief that one's own language is superior to all others and that speakers of other languages should adopt or defer to it. The word *chauvinism*, originally from a French soldier (Nicolas Chauvin) said to be excessively devoted to Napoleon, now names any aggressive, exclusive pride: linguistic, national, gender-based, ethnic. M. Hamel's story shows pride in language used for defence (of a threatened tongue); chauvinism, by contrast, is pride used for offence (against other tongues).

> ☞ **Two kinds of pride**
>
> Defensive pride: love of one's own language in the face of threat (M. Hamel writing "Vive La France!"). Aggressive pride (chauvinism): scorn for other languages and refusal to share public space with them. The first is healthy; the second is harmful.

- **Yes, pride in one's language can be carried too far.** Loving and protecting one's

mother tongue is legitimate, especially when it is under threat. But the same love becomes harmful when it turns into the *rejection* of other languages.

- **Linguistic chauvinism, defined.** A linguistic chauvinist insists that everyone in the workplace, school, market or public office must speak their language; refuses to learn the local language when migrating; mocks accents; bars signage in other tongues; and treats speakers of other languages as second-class.
- **Symptoms of linguistic chauvinism.** Forcing signage to be in one language only; demanding that immigrants "go back" if they cannot speak the dominant tongue; calling other languages "inferior", "ugly" or "dialect"; insisting that one language alone is fit for philosophy, science or poetry; punishing children in school for speaking their mother tongue (as happened to Welsh and Indigenous children, and as the Berlin order was about to do in Alsace).
- **Why this is harmful.** It produces resentment in minorities, encourages language loss, breaks the everyday comradeship of multilingual societies, and ultimately leads to the very kind of decree that Daudet's story criticises. The conqueror in the story is, by definition, a linguistic chauvinist; that is what the Berlin order on German shows.
- **The healthy alternative.** *Pride without scorn.* Love your mother tongue, speak it at home, teach it to your children, defend it from extinction; but also learn other languages, respect their literatures, and welcome speakers of other tongues into your public life. India's three-language formula and the Constitution's Eighth Schedule both rest on this principle.
- **Read in this light, the story.** M. Hamel is a passionate lover of French but not a chauvinist. He never insults German; he simply refuses to let French be erased from his children's mouths. The Berlin order, on the other hand, is chauvinist by definition. The story's quiet moral is that one can be wholehearted about one's own language without being cruel to anyone else's.

> **Final Answer:** Yes, pride in one's language can be carried too far. When love of one's mother tongue turns into scorn for other languages, into refusal to share public space with them, or into laws that ban or downgrade them, it becomes *linguistic chauvinism*: an aggressive, exclusive pride that produces the very conquest Daudet's story warns against. The healthy alternative is M. Hamel's stance: defend your language passionately, but never humiliate someone else's.

✗ Common Mistake

A common slip is to read the story as advocating that one language is best. M. Hamel's claim that French is "the most beautiful language in the world" is the natural exaggeration of a man defending a threatened tongue, not a recommendation that students adopt the same view of their own language. Quote the line but read it in context.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Tanmay Ghoshal, PhD Comparative Literature, Visva-Bharati Santiniketan*

Strategic angle. The most useful frame for this question is the difference between *linguistic loyalty* (a virtue) and *linguistic chauvinism* (a vice). Both are forms of love for language, but their object is opposite: loyalty cherishes one language without diminishing others; chauvinism cherishes one language by diminishing others.

- Linguistic loyalty looks like: speaking your mother tongue at home, reading literature in it, fighting attempts to ban it, teaching it to children, defending its dignity in public.
- Linguistic chauvinism looks like: imposing your language on others, ridiculing accents, refusing to learn the local tongue when you migrate, banning signage in other languages, legislating that "only X shall be taught" (as the Berlin order does in the story).
- In Indian conversations, the slogan "one nation, one language" is the textbook example of linguistic chauvinism when applied without sensitivity to the country's multilingual fabric. The Constitution's recognition of 22 scheduled languages, and Articles 29 and 350A, are designed precisely to keep loyalty without sliding into chauvinism.
- The same distinction holds globally. The Quebec movement for French in Canada, the Catalan and Basque movements in Spain, the Welsh and Irish revivals in the United Kingdom all aim to protect a threatened mother tongue. They tilt into chauvinism only when they propose to suppress other tongues in the same territory.
- For a Class 12 reader, the practical guide is: love your own tongue all the way; respect other tongues all the way. The two are not in conflict, and the story's M. Hamel is the model of both at once.

Why this matters. Naming the difference between loyalty and chauvinism turns this question from an opinion into an analysis. The strongest answers do not just say "yes, it can go too far"; they say *where* it goes too far and *what* it becomes when it does. A useful test: ask whether the action under discussion (a slogan, a school policy, a piece of signage, a piece of legislation) protects your language or attacks someone else's. Protective measures are loyalty; attacking measures are chauvinism.

A second test, drawn from the story itself: imagine M. Hamel hearing about the action. Would he applaud it as the same kind of gesture he made with his chalked "Vive La France!"? Or would he recognise it as the same kind of decree he was protesting against? The chalk-on-blackboard test is a clean way to separate the healthy form of pride from its disfigured cousin.

Final Answer: Pride in one's language can be carried too far. When loyalty hardens into the refusal to share public space with other languages, into mockery of their speakers, or into laws that ban their teaching, it becomes linguistic chauvinism. M. Hamel models the alternative: defend your mother tongue without diminishing anyone else's. Loyalty without arrogance is the healthy form; chauvinism is its deformation. Apply the chalk-on-blackboard test, and the line between the two becomes practically usable.

Working with words

Q 1.11 English is a language that contains words from many other languages. Find out the origins of the following words: tycoon, barbecue, zero, tulip, veranda, ski, logo, robot, trek, bandicoot.

SOLUTION

English is famously a **borrowing language**: it absorbs vocabulary from every culture it encounters, through trade, conquest, science, food, sport and migration. Knowing word origins (**etymology**) helps students see the deep multilingual history of a tongue that looks single on the surface. Below are the origins of the ten words listed, with a short note on how each entered English.

☞ **How to read the list**

For each word, name the source language and (where relevant) the exact root or path of borrowing. A one-line gloss is enough.

- **tycoon**: Japanese, from *taikun* ("great lord"), used as a title for the Shogun; entered English in the mid-19th century via American visitors to Japan.
- **barbecue**: from the Spanish *barbacoa*, itself borrowed from the Taino (Caribbean Arawak) word for a wooden frame used for grilling meat over a fire.
- **zero**: from the Arabic *sifr* ("empty"), via the Italian *zero* and the Medieval Latin *zephirum*. The Arabic word itself was a translation of the Sanskrit *shunya*.
- **tulip**: from the Persian/Turkish *tulipan* ("turban"), because the flower's shape resembles a turban; entered English via Dutch traders in the 17th century.
- **veranda** (also spelled verandah): from Hindi *varāndā*, probably itself from Portuguese *varanda* ("railing, balustrade"); entered English from colonial India.
- **ski**: from Norwegian *ski* ("a split piece of wood"), itself from Old Norse *skí* .
- **logo**: a shortening of the Greek-derived English word *logotype*, from Greek *logos* ("word"). A 20th-century commercial coinage.

- **robot**: from the Czech word *robota* ("forced labour"), coined for Karel Čapek's 1920 play *R.U.R.* (Rossum's Universal Robots).
- **trek**: from Afrikaans/Dutch *trekken* ("to pull, to travel"), entered English from the Boer Great Trek in 19th-century South Africa.
- **bandicoot**: from the Telugu *pandi-kokku* ("pig-rat"); entered English from south-Indian English usage in the 18th century.

Final Answer: tycoon (Japanese), barbecue (Taino via Spanish), zero (Arabic via Italian, from Sanskrit *shunya*), tulip (Persian via Turkish and Dutch), veranda (Hindi, via Portuguese), ski (Norwegian), logo (Greek, modern coinage), robot (Czech, from *robota*), trek (Afrikaans/Dutch), bandicoot (Telugu *pandi-kokku*). English borrows from every neighbour and every trade route it has ever touched.

♥ Why This Matters

This question quietly contradicts the assumption behind the Berlin order in the story. A language that has any history at all is already multilingual on the inside. The "purity" of any single tongue is a political fiction; the richness of English is built out of words like *zero*, *tulip* and *veranda* that were once foreign and are now home.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Neha Kapadia, PhD Historical Linguistics, Deccan College Pune*

Strategic angle. The list is curated to display the global sweep of English vocabulary. Each word is a tiny piece of history: trade with Japan (tycoon), Caribbean cooking (barbecue), Arabic and Indian mathematics (zero), Ottoman gardens (tulip), Indian architecture (veranda), Norwegian winters (ski), Greek philosophy (logo from logos), Czech theatre of the 1920s (robot), South African migration (trek), and Indian agriculture (bandicoot from Telugu).

- Notice that several of these words come from Asia: tycoon (Japan), zero (Sanskrit via Arabic), tulip (Persian), veranda (Hindi), bandicoot (Telugu). English is far more of an Asian language, lexically, than its Germanic grammar suggests.
- Notice that several come from indigenous languages of the Americas (barbecue) and from minority European languages (Czech for robot, Norwegian for ski). English routinely adopts vocabulary from peoples whose political power is far smaller than its own.
- Notice that one word, *logo*, is a modern Greek-rooted commercial coinage. English manufactures new words by going back to classical roots when borrowing is not enough. Etymology is therefore both backward (origins) and forward (coinages).
- The pedagogical point of this exercise is to make students suspicious of any claim that a language is "pure". English is openly mixed; so, on closer inspection, is every major

language in the world.

- For a Class 12 answer that aims higher, end the list with a sentence linking back to Daudet: if English is what it is because of borrowing, then the Berlin order's project, of making a language artificially monolingual, is doomed by the nature of language itself.

Why this matters. Etymology turns vocabulary lists into mini-histories. Every borrowed word is a small monument to a moment of contact between peoples. The exercise reminds students that languages live by exchange, not by isolation.

> **Final Answer:** All ten words are loans into English from other languages: tycoon (Japanese), barbecue (Taino via Spanish), zero (Sanskrit and Arabic), tulip (Persian via Turkish/Dutch), veranda (Hindi via Portuguese), ski (Norwegian), logo (Greek root, modern coinage), robot (Czech), trek (Afrikaans), bandicoot (Telugu). The list shows English as a hub of global exchange, which is itself a quiet counter-argument to the Berlin order's vision of a purified monolingual school.

Q 1.12 **Notice the underlined words in these sentences and tick the option that best explains their meaning. (a) "What a thunderclap these words were to me!" (b) "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". (c) "Don't go so fast, you will get to your school in plenty of time." (d) "I never saw him look so tall."**

SOLUTION

Each underlined phrase in this exercise is a figurative expression: it does not mean exactly what it says on the surface, and the question tests whether students can read meaning from context. The four phrases are answered one by one, with reasons.

> ☞ **How to attack each option**
>
> Read the surrounding sentence first. Eliminate the literal-only option ("loud and clear") if the phrase is clearly metaphorical; keep the figurative one ("startling and unexpected"). Then justify in one short sentence.

- **(a) "What a thunderclap these words were to me!" → (ii) startling and unexpected.** A real thunderclap is sudden and shocking; here Franz is describing how M. Hamel's words, announcing the last French lesson, hit him without warning. "Loud and clear" (i) is too literal; "pleasant and welcome" (iii) is the opposite of his reaction. Only "startling and unexpected" fits.
- **(b) "When a people are enslaved . . . they had the key to their prison." → (ii) are attached to their language.** The prison-key image means that as long as the people

hold fast to their language, that is, remain emotionally and culturally attached to it, they keep the means of unlocking their freedom. Option (i) “do not lose their language” is partially right but weaker; (iii) “quickly learn the conqueror’s language” is the opposite of what M. Hamel means.

- **(c) “Don’t go so fast, you will get to your school in plenty of time.” → (iii) early enough.** The blacksmith Wachter is calling out to Franz ironically: he knows that there is no need to rush because something unusual is waiting at the school. “Plenty of time” here means “you have more time than you think”. Option (i) “very late” is wrong; (ii) “too early” is closer but too strong; “early enough” (iii) catches Wachter’s quiet meaning best.
- **(d) “I never saw him look so tall.” → (b) seemed very confident.** At the climax of the lesson, M. Hamel stands “very pale” on his chair and writes “Vive La France!” on the board with all his strength. Franz cannot mean that the teacher has literally grown: option (a) is the literal-only trap, and (c) is from the wrong scene. The meaning is that M. Hamel *looked taller in Franz’s eyes* because of his dignity, his calm courage and his refusal to be small in front of the new order. “Seemed very confident” captures that.

> **Final Answer:** (a) (ii) startling and unexpected; (b) (ii) are attached to their language; (c) (iii) early enough; (d) (b) seemed very confident. Each underlined phrase is figurative: the right option is always the one that reads the image (thunderclap, key, plenty of time, tall) for its emotional sense, not its literal one.

☞ Exam Tip

For these MCQ-style word-meaning items, write the correct option *and* one short reason. The reason is what distinguishes a guess from a reading, and examiners often reward it.

EXPERT’S SOLUTION : *Ms Lavanya Ramesh, MA English, Madras Christian College*

Strategic angle. Each of the four phrases is a small case study in how Daudet uses figurative language. Reading them together also reveals the story’s emotional arc: shock → political awareness → tender irony → admiration.

- In (a) “thunderclap” is an *aural* metaphor for sudden bad news. It is the moment the story turns: Franz moves from ordinary truant to grief-stricken pupil at the speed of a thunderclap.
- In (b) “key to their prison” is a *political* image. M. Hamel is naming language as the most portable tool of resistance available to a conquered people. The right option is the one that catches both attachment and instrumentality.
- In (c) “plenty of time” is *ironic understatement*. Wachter, the blacksmith, has already

read the notice; he is saying, in effect, “you cannot be late for a school that no longer is”. Daudet plants this small irony so that the reader, on a second reading, catches it.

- In (d) “look so tall” is a *visual* metaphor for dignity. Franz is the same height as before, and so is M. Hamel; what has changed is Franz’s perception of his teacher under stress.
- Together, the four phrases show how a short story carries large meaning by leaning on the figurative reserves of everyday language. The exercise is therefore also a small course in close reading.

Why this matters. For Class 12 boards, MCQ items on figurative language test exactly this skill. The student who can say *why* an option is right (and not just which) will retain the skill far beyond the exam hall.

> **Final Answer:** (a) (ii) startling and unexpected; (b) (ii) are attached to their language; (c) (iii) early enough; (d) (b) seemed very confident. Each item is a small workout in close reading: name the image, read its emotional weight, and pick the option that catches both.

Noticing form

Q 1.13 Read this sentence: “M. Hamel had said that he would question us on participles.” The verb form “had said” is the past perfect. Pick out five sentences from the story with this form of the verb and say why this form has been used.

SOLUTION

The past perfect is formed with *had* + the past participle of the main verb (e.g. *had said, had been, had counted, had brought, had planted*). It names an action that was completed *before* another past moment. In a story told in the past, the past perfect supplies the “earlier past”: background events that happened before the main narrative.

> ☞ **Quick rule**
> Past simple = main timeline of the story. Past perfect = events *further back* than that timeline.
> Form: *had* + past participle.

- **(1) “For the last two years all our bad news *had come* from there.”** Reason: This sentence is spoken on the morning of the story. The two years of bad news began earlier, so the past perfect places those years in the narrative’s deeper past.
- **(2) “I *had counted on* the commotion to get to my desk without being seen.”** Reason: Franz’s plan was made before he reached the school. The past perfect marks

the earlier-than-arrival plan against the present-arrival scene.

- **(3) “Old Hauser *had brought* an old primer, thumbed at the edges.”** Reason: Bringing the primer happened before the moment Franz notices it on his lap. The past perfect makes the order of events clear.
- **(4) “M. Hamel *had put on* his fine Sunday clothes . . . ” (paraphrasing “it was in honour of this last lesson that he had put on his fine Sunday clothes”).** Reason: M. Hamel dressed up before the lesson began, that is, before the present narrative time. The past perfect signals the prior action.
- **(5) “The hopvine that he *had planted* himself twined about the windows to the roof.”** Reason: M. Hamel planted the hopvine years earlier; the narrator sees it on the morning of the story. The past perfect anchors the planting in the deeper past.

> **Final Answer:** Five past-perfect sentences from the story: “*had come* from there”, “*had counted on* the commotion”, “*had brought* an old primer”, “*had put on* his fine Sunday clothes”, and “the hopvine that he *had planted* himself”. In every case the past perfect names an action that happened *before* the main past-tense events of the morning, giving the story its layered sense of time.

♥ Why This Matters

The past perfect is the tense of memory inside a story. Without it, Franz’s narration would flatten to a single timeline. With it, the reader can feel the difference between what is happening now (Franz walking into school) and what had already happened (the bulletin-board notices, M. Hamel dressing up, the hopvine being planted).

EXPERT’S SOLUTION *: Prof Aditya Bhargava, MA Applied Linguistics, Banaras Hindu University*

Structural observation. Daudet uses the past perfect at exactly the moments when the narrative needs to reach into a deeper past: childhood habits (“had counted on the commotion”), two-year political background (“bad news had come from there”), prior teacher action (“had put on his Sunday clothes”), prior biographical action (“had planted himself”). The tense is therefore not decorative; it is the mechanism by which a short story carries history.

- In sentence (1), the past perfect compresses two years of Franco-Prussian war news into a single clause. Without *had come*, the reader would have to guess at the time frame; with it, the depth is exact.
- In sentence (2), the past perfect lets the reader see Franz’s calculation *before* he reaches the door of the school. Without it, the plan and the failure would seem to happen at the same time.
- In sentence (3), the past perfect quietly tells us that old Hauser made a deliberate

decision to bring the primer from home. The choice of tense gives the gesture weight.

- In sentence (4), *had put on* situates M. Hamel's dressing as a pre-lesson act of preparation, not a spontaneous response. The grammar tells us this is a planned ceremony.
- In sentence (5), the past perfect spans the deepest time in the story: forty years ago M. Hamel planted the hopvine. The grammar carries his whole career in a single clause.
- Notice that the past perfect is used for both small acts (counting on commotion) and large arcs (forty years of gardening). The tense is the same; the depth it reaches varies with the verb.

Why this matters. For Class 12 students, this question is also a quiet grammar lesson on how literature uses tense for storytelling. The past perfect is not just "had + past participle" on a worksheet; it is the literary device that lets a short story hold years.

> **Final Answer:** The five past-perfect verbs (had come, had counted on, had brought, had put on, had planted) all reach back from the morning of the story into an earlier past: a two-year political background, a child's pre-school plan, an old man's gesture from home, a teacher's ceremonial dressing, and a hopvine planted forty years ago. Daudet uses the tense to give a short story the depth of a chronicle.

Writing

Q 1.14 Write a notice for your school bulletin board. Your notice could be an announcement of a forthcoming event, or a requirement to be fulfilled, or a rule to be followed.

SOLUTION

A school notice is a short, public, dated piece of writing posted on the bulletin board so that every student in the school gets the same information at the same time. The CBSE Class 12 marking scheme expects four things: a clear heading, the date, the body of the notice in a single short paragraph (about 50 words), and the signature block of the person issuing it. Below is a model notice.

☞ **Sample notice**

NOTICE BOARD

KENDRIYA VIDYALAYA, SECTOR 10, NEW DELHI

INTER-HOUSE DEBATE COMPETITION

2 December 2026

The Literary Society will hold the annual Inter-House Debate Competition on Friday, 12 December 2026, in the school auditorium from 10.00 a.m. to 1.00 p.m. The topic is "Mother tongue should be the medium of instruction in all Indian schools". Each house must register two speakers (one for and one against) with the undersigned by 6 December 2026. Entries received after the deadline will not be accepted.

Sd/–

Ananya Sharma

Head Girl, Literary Society

- **Title block.** Name of the school in capitals at the top, the heading *NOTICE BOARD* above or below it, and a thin horizontal rule. These three pieces orient the reader instantly.
- **Headline.** A bold, all-caps headline of three to six words tells the student what the notice is about without the need to read further. Examples: "LOST AND FOUND", "BLOOD-DONATION CAMP", "NEW LIBRARY TIMINGS".
- **Date.** Always place the date directly under the headline. Use the form "12 December 2026", not "12/12/26", because the bulletin board is meant for a general reader.
- **Body.** A single, short paragraph of 40-50 words. Cover the five W-questions: *what* the event is, *when* it will happen, *where* it will happen, *who* is invited or expected to attend, and any action the reader must take (register, bring a copy of the ID-card, follow a dress code).
- **Signature block.** Always sign off with *Sd/–*, your name in bold and your position. A notice without a signature is not a valid school notice.

☞ **Word-count and tone**

The CBSE Class 12 word limit for a notice is about 50 words. Use a plain, public-information tone: no slang, no abbreviations and no first-person opinions. The notice must read the same way to every student in every section of the school.

> **Final Answer:** A model school-bulletin notice has six parts in this order: the school's name in capitals; the heading *NOTICE BOARD*; a thin horizontal rule; a short bold headline; the date in full word form; a 40-50 word body answering what, when, where, who and why; and a signature block beginning with *Sd/–*, the issuer's name and the issuer's role.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Aanya Sharma, MA English Literature, Lady Shri Ram College Delhi*

Strategic angle. A board examiner gives 5 marks for a notice: 1 for format, 2 for content, 1 for grammar and 1 for expression. Most candidates lose the format mark by skipping the school name or the signature block, and lose the content mark by forgetting one of the five W-questions. The model above is designed to bank all 5 marks.

- Treat the notice like a school-administration document, not like a creative-writing exercise. The marker is looking for completeness and clarity, not for originality of phrasing.
- Always frame the headline as a noun phrase, never as a sentence: "Inter-House Debate Competition" is right, "We are holding the Inter-House Debate Competition" is wrong.
- Inside the body, use the future tense ("will hold", "will be conducted") for events that have not yet happened, and the imperative ("Register your name with", "Bring a soft copy of") for the action you want the reader to take.
- The signature line *Sd/–* stands for *signed*; it is the standard mark in CBSE functional-writing tasks. Forgetting it costs the format mark.

Why this matters. A neatly formatted notice can lift a weak literature answer by up to 4 marks in a 5-mark task, because the format is non-negotiable and is reused across functional-writing questions like advertisements and posters.

> **Final Answer:** A model bulletin-board notice carries: (i) the school's name in capitals; (ii) the heading *NOTICE BOARD*; (iii) a thin horizontal rule; (iv) a short bold noun-phrase headline; (v) the date in long form; (vi) a 40-50 word body that names the event, the time, the venue, the invitees and the action required; and (vii) a signature block beginning with *Sd/–*, the issuer's name in bold and the issuer's role.

Q 1.15 **Write a paragraph of about 100 words arguing for or against having to study three languages at school.**

SOLUTION

The Indian school system under the three-language formula asks a student to study three languages: usually a regional or mother tongue, Hindi, and English. The CBSE Class 12 examiner expects a single tight paragraph of about 100 words that takes a clear side, gives two or three reasons, and supports each reason with a specific example. A model paragraph follows.

☞ **Sample paragraph, in favour of three languages**

I argue *in favour* of studying three languages at school. A mother tongue carries the culture, songs and family memory of a student; without it, a child grows up half-rooted. A national language (Hindi, in our case) lets a Tamil speaker speak to a Bengali speaker in Bhopal, on a train, at a market; it is the common floor of citizenship inside India. English is the working language of higher education, the courts, science and global work; without a reasonable command of English, a student is shut out of universities and jobs that they have every right to enter. Three languages, far from being a burden, are three different keys to three different rooms: the family room, the country room and the world room. The Indian school day is long enough to teach all three at a level a Class 12 student can manage.

- **Take one side cleanly.** The opening sentence must announce whether you are for or against. "I argue in favour of..." or "I argue against..." is the standard CBSE opener.
- **Give two or three reasons.** For 100 words, three compact reasons are ideal. Each reason gets one short sentence of justification and one example.
- **Use a metaphor or analogy to close.** The reader remembers the metaphor longer than the reasons. The paragraph above closes with "three different keys to three different rooms" to fix the argument in memory.
- **Word count.** Keep within 90-110 words. The examiner counts; staying inside the band is part of the marking.

☞ **The three-language formula in India**

India's three-language formula was first recommended by the Kothari Commission (1964-66) and remains a centrepiece of the National Education Policy. The policy aims to give every Indian student access to a mother tongue, a link language for inter-state communication and an international language for higher study. The Last Lesson, by reminding us how cruel the loss of even one language can be, becomes a quiet defence of this very policy.

Final Answer: A successful 100-word paragraph on the three-language formula opens with a clear stand, defends it with two or three short reasons (cultural identity, inter-state communication, global access), supports each reason with a one-line example, and closes with a memorable metaphor. The paragraph stays within the 90-110 word band the CBSE marking scheme expects.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION : *Dr Rohit Mehta, PhD Applied Linguistics, EFLU Hyderabad*

Strategic angle. The board examiner has seen a thousand "three languages are good" paragraphs that list reasons without examples. The winning move is to pin every reason to a concrete classroom or street-level moment, so the paragraph reads like a real argument made by a real student.

- *Cultural identity.* Anchor it to a song, a festival word, or a grandparent's blessing in the mother tongue. That single image carries the whole argument.
- *Inter-state communication.* Use a real Indian scene: ordering food in Mumbai, asking for directions in Hyderabad. The example does the work the abstract noun cannot.
- *Global access.* Don't write "English is important". Write "the entrance exam to most engineering colleges is in English; a student who cannot read the question paper cannot answer it". Specific is persuasive.
- *Counter-argument acknowledgement.* A top-band paragraph briefly admits the load is heavy ("three timetables") and then says the long-term gain outweighs the short-term effort. Acknowledging the other side adds maturity.

Why this matters. Argument paragraphs are marked on *thesis, reasons, examples, expression and word-count*. A paragraph that ticks all five is a 5-on-5 paragraph. The model above is designed to do exactly that. Most candidates who score in the low band do so because they make the same mistake: a long opening, a thin middle and no closing image. The marker remembers the closing line; spend the most planning effort on getting that one sentence right.

Common mistakes. Three slips lose marks on this task. First, sitting on the fence: a paragraph that begins "there are arguments on both sides" has no thesis to defend, and the examiner cannot award the thesis mark. Second, listing without examples: "three languages are good because they are useful" is a wasted sentence. Always pin a reason to a concrete moment inside an Indian classroom, market or family scene. Third, losing track of the word-count: at 100 words you have room for about six sentences. Plan thesis, three reasons, three examples, a brief concession and a closing image, then write tight.

Common pitfalls in the AGAINST stance. If you take the opposite side, write "I argue against the three-language formula because the cognitive load on a Class 6 to 10 student is too heavy", then back it with the lost-classroom-hours argument and the working-memory research. End with a counter-image such as "one well-mastered language is a hammer; three half-mastered languages are three blunt screwdrivers". The shape is the same; only the position changes.

Final Answer: A model 100-word "in-favour" paragraph names the three-language formula, gives three concrete reasons (mother tongue for cultural identity, Hindi for inter-state communication, English for global access), pins each reason to a specific Indian-classroom moment, briefly concedes the workload, and closes with a memorable image ("three keys to three different rooms").

Q 1.16 **Have you ever changed your opinion about someone or something that you had earlier liked or disliked? Narrate what led you to change your mind.**

SOLUTION

The question asks for a short personal narrative in the first person, of about 120-150 words, in which the writer changes a clearly held opinion. The CBSE Class 12 marker expects three movements: the opinion held earlier, the trigger that began the change, and the new opinion the writer holds today. A model narrative follows.

☞ **Sample narrative**

For years I had quietly disliked the history class. The textbook was a list of dates: 1206, 1526, 1857. The teacher read out the list and we underlined it. I thought history was the dullest subject in the world. The change came in Class 11, when our new teacher Mrs. Reddy began the chapter on Partition by asking us to interview one elderly person in our family about 1947. My grandmother, who almost never speaks of her childhood, sat with me for two evenings and told me a story I had never heard: how her family of nine left a town in Sindh with two suitcases, how my great-grandfather refused to leave his cat behind, and how they ended up in a refugee camp in Pilani. The dates suddenly fitted onto faces and houses I knew. History stopped being a list and became my own family. I now study the subject with a kind of hunger.

- **Open with the earlier opinion in one sentence.** "For years I had quietly disliked X." The reader knows exactly where you are starting from.
- **Name the trigger.** A new teacher, a book, a film, a conversation, a journey. The trigger should be small and specific, not heroic.
- **Describe one concrete moment.** A single scene with names, objects and dialogue lands harder than a paragraph of reflection. The grandmother's two suitcases and the rescued cat do the work for the whole essay.
- **Close with the new opinion.** "I now..." or "Today..." marks the shift. The closing should be quiet, not triumphant.

☞ **Three-act shape**

Earlier opinion (act 1) – trigger and key scene (act 2) – new opinion (act 3). This is the same shape Daudet uses in *The Last Lesson*: Franz dislikes M. Hamel and French grammar; the announcement and the silent classroom act as the trigger; by noon Franz has grown up and reveres what he once mocked.

Final Answer: A successful change-of-opinion narrative has three movements in about 120-150 words: a clear earlier opinion, a small and specific trigger (a teacher, a book, a journey, a conversation), one concrete scene with names and objects, and a quiet closing sentence that names the new opinion. The change must feel earned, not announced.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Mr Karan Joshi, MA English, Hindu College Delhi*

Strategic angle. The marker is reading hundreds of narratives where students simply assert "I have changed" without showing the change. The high-mark answer dramatises one scene and lets the reader infer the change from the scene.

- *Show, don't tell.* Replace "I learned to love history" with "my grandmother brought out a black leather album and pointed to a Sindhi house". Specific objects are persuasive evidence of change.
- *Use the past simple, not the past perfect.* "She told me", "He laughed", "We sat" read more clearly than "She had told me". Save the past perfect for the opening sentence ("For years I had disliked. . . "), where it locates the earlier opinion in the deep past.
- *One scene only.* A 120-150 word narrative cannot carry two scenes. Pick the most resonant moment and stay with it.
- *Last-line landing.* "I now study the subject with a kind of hunger." The final line should feel like a door clicking shut. Avoid moralising ("and that taught me an important lesson").

Why this matters. Narrative writing is a high-yield question on CBSE Class 12: 4-5 marks for a 120-150 word answer. A student who can dramatise one scene with a few specific objects and pronouns is rewarded for craft, not just accuracy. The marker is looking for evidence that you understand storytelling as a craft, not as a moral exercise. A specific grandmother with a specific album beats a general "my elder relative who taught me a lot".

Common mistakes. Four patterns lose marks. (1) Starting in the middle: "One day, my opinion changed" wastes the opening sentence which should locate the earlier opinion. (2) Naming the lesson rather than showing it: "I learned that history is important" is a sentence the marker has seen a thousand times. Replace it with a sensory detail. (3)

Overusing quotation marks: a 120-word piece does not need two lines of dialogue. One short quoted line is enough. (4) Skipping the trigger: a narrative that jumps from "earlier I disliked X" to "today I love X" has no narrative middle. The trigger is the narrative middle.

What an examiner-favourite ending looks like. Treat the last sentence as a closing door. "I now read every history chapter as if it were the next page of my grandmother's album" is the kind of line that locks the marker's score in the top band. The image rhymes with the trigger scene and lets the reader feel the shift without being told.

> **Final Answer:** A high-mark change-of-opinion narrative uses a three-act shape (earlier opinion, small specific trigger, new opinion), dramatises one concrete scene with names and objects, prefers the past simple to the past perfect in the body, and ends with a quiet last line that names the new opinion without moralising.

Things to do

Q 1.17 Find out about the following (You may go to the internet, interview people, consult reference books or visit a library): (a) Linguistic human rights, (b) Constitutional guarantees for linguistic minorities in India.

SOLUTION

The question is an extension activity: it asks the student to step outside the classroom and gather facts about how the right to a language is protected by law. A model write-up has two short sections, one on the international concept of linguistic human rights, one on the Indian constitutional position.

☞ **(a) Linguistic human rights**

Linguistic human rights are the freedoms a person has to use their own language in private and in public life. The idea was developed in the second half of the twentieth century, partly in response to incidents like the one Daudet describes in *The Last Lesson*. Two key international documents recognise these rights:

- **Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948), Article 2:** no person may be discriminated against on the basis of their language.
- **International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights (1966), Article 27:** persons belonging to a linguistic minority shall not be denied the right, in community with the other members of their group, to use their own language.
- **UNESCO Universal Declaration on Linguistic Rights (Barcelona, 1996):** every linguistic community has the right to teach its language, to receive education in its

language, and to use its language in dealings with the State.

- **Working understanding.** A linguistic human right therefore covers: speaking your language at home, learning in your language at school up to a reasonable level, using your language in courts and government offices, having your name and place names rendered correctly in your language, and accessing media in your language.

☞ **(b) Constitutional guarantees in India**

The Indian Constitution, written between 1947 and 1950, was acutely aware of the diversity of Indian languages. Four provisions are directly relevant to linguistic minorities.

- **Article 29(1).** "Any section of the citizens residing in the territory of India or any part thereof having a distinct language, script or culture of its own shall have the right to conserve the same." This is the core constitutional guarantee for any linguistic minority.
- **Article 30(1).** Religious and linguistic minorities have the right to establish and administer educational institutions of their choice. A Tamil-medium school in Mumbai or a Sindhi-medium school in Delhi derives its legal protection from this Article.
- **Article 350A.** It shall be the endeavour of every State and local authority to provide adequate facilities for instruction in the mother tongue at the primary stage of education to children belonging to linguistic minority groups.
- **Article 350B.** The President shall appoint a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities, whose duty is to investigate all matters relating to the safeguards provided for linguistic minorities and report to the President.
- **Eighth Schedule of the Constitution.** The Schedule currently lists 22 recognised languages (Assamese, Bengali, Bodo, Dogri, Gujarati, Hindi, Kannada, Kashmiri, Konkani, Maithili, Malayalam, Manipuri, Marathi, Nepali, Odia, Punjabi, Sanskrit, Santhali, Sindhi, Tamil, Telugu, Urdu). Their inclusion guarantees representation on the Official Languages Commission and the right to take national-level examinations in these languages.

☞ **How to present this in an answer**

The CBSE marker rewards an answer that names *at least one international document and at least two Indian Articles* by number. Use Articles 29, 30, 350A and 350B as your core; mention the Eighth Schedule as a bonus.

Final Answer: Linguistic human rights are recognised internationally through the Universal Declaration of Human Rights (1948, Article 2), the ICCPR (1966, Article 27) and the UNESCO Barcelona Declaration on Linguistic Rights (1996). In India, linguistic minorities are protected by Article 29(1) (right to conserve language), Article 30(1) (right to set up minority-medium schools), Article 350A (mother-tongue instruction at the primary stage), Article 350B (a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities) and the Eighth Schedule (twenty-two recognised languages).

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Dr Meera Subramanian, PhD Constitutional Law, NLSIU Bangalore*

Strategic angle. For a Class 12 board answer, examiners do not expect a complete law-school treatment. They expect a clear two-part structure (international – domestic), four to six named provisions in total, and a closing sentence that links the material back to *The Last Lesson*.

- *Lead with Article 29 in the Indian part.* It is the broadest and most quoted provision; many candidates skip it and go straight to Article 350A. Article 29 is the umbrella; the others sit under it.
- *Pair each Article with a real-world example.* Article 30 covers the Madarsa Board case-law in northern India; Article 350A is invoked in the right-to-school in the mother tongue cases in Karnataka; Article 350B's Special Officer publishes an annual report which is publicly available.
- *Mention the Eighth Schedule as a list, not as an argument.* The number twenty-two is the headline; the list is the evidence.
- *Close with a one-line link to Daudet.* "What the French children lose under the Berlin order is exactly what these Articles try to prevent inside India." That sentence wins the literature mark inside a civics answer.

Why this matters. This kind of cross-subject answer (literature + civics) is increasingly favoured by CBSE because it tests application as well as recall. A student who can connect the Berlin order in 1870 Alsace to Article 350A in 1950 India is showing exactly the kind of integrated thinking the board rewards. The integration also matters as a citizenship lesson: the chapter becomes a lens through which to see the country the student is about to vote in.

Common mistakes. Five slips cost marks. (1) Confusing Articles 350A and 350B: the first is about mother-tongue instruction at the primary stage, the second is about the Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities. The numbers and the content must match. (2) Forgetting the international layer: a purely Indian answer misses an easy mark for naming the UDHR or the ICCPR. (3) Counting languages incorrectly: the Eighth Schedule has 22 languages after the 92nd Amendment (which added Bodo, Dogri, Maithili and Santhali in 2003); answers that still say 18 are stale. (4) Treating Article 29

as if it were only for religious minorities: it covers any section of citizens having a distinct language, script or culture, regardless of religion. (5) Stopping at the law: the top-band answer adds a real case (the Karnataka medium-of-instruction litigation, the right of Sindhi or Konkani speakers to set up minority-medium schools) so the provisions feel alive, not abstract.

Extra credit angle. Mention the Languages Commission's periodic report, the role of the National Commission for Linguistic Minorities (the Article 350B body in operation), and the 2024 amendments under consideration for adding further languages to the Eighth Schedule. Such currency cues to the examiner that the student has read beyond the textbook.

> **Final Answer:** Internationally, linguistic human rights are recognised by the UDHR (1948), the ICCPR (1966) and the UNESCO Barcelona Declaration (1996). In India, Articles 29(1) and 30(1) protect the right to conserve a language and to set up minority-medium schools; Articles 350A and 350B mandate mother-tongue instruction at the primary stage and the appointment of a Special Officer for Linguistic Minorities; and the Eighth Schedule recognises 22 official languages. Together these provisions ensure that what Daudet's Alsatian children lose under the Berlin order cannot legally happen to any linguistic community in India.

Q 1.18 **Given below is a survey form. Talk to at least five of your classmates and fill in the information you get in the form: (S.No., Languages you know, Home language, Neighbourhood language, City/Town language, School language).**

SOLUTION

The activity is a small piece of fieldwork. The student is asked to interview five classmates and record, for each, the languages they know plus four "location-specific" languages: home, neighbourhood, city, school. The point of the exercise is to discover that an average urban Indian student moves between three or four languages every day, often without noticing.

☞ **Model survey result, Class 12-A, Delhi**

No.	Languages known	Home	Neighbourhood	City	School
1	Hindi, English, Bengali	Bengali	Hindi	Hindi	English
2	Hindi, English, Punjabi	Punjabi	Hindi/Punjabi	Hindi	English
3	Hindi, English, Telugu	Telugu	Hindi	Hindi	English
4	Hindi, English, Urdu	Urdu	Hindi/Urdu	Hindi	English
5	Hindi, English	Hindi	Hindi	Hindi	English

- **Languages known column.** Most urban Class 12 students in India report knowing three languages; some report four. Hindi and English are nearly always two of the three. The mother tongue (Bengali, Punjabi, Telugu, Urdu in the table above) is usually the third.
- **Home language column.** This is almost always the mother tongue, the language in which the student was first addressed by the family. For monolingual families the home column matches the city column.
- **Neighbourhood language column.** This is the language a student uses with the kirana-shop owner, the cobbler, the autorickshaw driver. In many Indian cities this is a mix (Hindi/Punjabi in Delhi, Hindi/Urdu in Lucknow, Marathi/Hindi in Mumbai).
- **City/Town language column.** This is the *lingua franca* of the city. In Delhi it is Hindi, in Chennai it is Tamil, in Kolkata it is Bengali, in Bengaluru it is a mix of Kannada and English.
- **School language column.** For most urban English-medium schools this is English. Some schools list Hindi or the State language as the second school language through the three-language formula.

☞ **A typical Class 12 student lives in four languages**

A Bengali-speaking student in Delhi might speak Bengali at home, Hindi in the street, Hindi when buying milk, and English at school. By Class 12 she has fluent or working command of three languages and a passing acquaintance with a fourth (often Punjabi or Urdu). The survey makes this normally invisible reality visible. Filling the form turns the multilingual life of an Indian student into a piece of evidence.

> **Final Answer:** A typical Class 12 classroom survey shows that every student speaks three to four languages across the four location-columns: a mother tongue at home, a neighbourhood mix in the street, a city *lingua franca* for daily transactions and English (or Hindi) as the medium of school instruction. The activity demonstrates, in a single short table, that the Indian school student is naturally multilingual.

EXPERT'S SOLUTION *: Ms Devika Iyer, MA Sociolinguistics, JNU Delhi*

Strategic angle. A board answer for this activity is graded on (i) the table itself, (ii) at least three observations the student draws from the table, and (iii) a closing comment that links the data back to Daudet's central concern, the right to keep your language.

- *Tabulate, don't narrate.* The marker can see the pattern in a table at a glance; a paragraph hides it.
- *Observations to draw.* Most Indian students live in a three- or four-language daily routine; the mother tongue often survives only at home; English dominates the school column; the neighbourhood column is where most code-switching happens.
- *Add a city comparison.* A student in Chennai or Hyderabad would report a very different city column from a student in Delhi. Mentioning this in one line shows the marker that the student understands the geographical variability of Indian multilingualism.
- *Closing link.* "Daudet shows what happens to a community when one column is forcibly taken from it. The survey above shows that an Indian student already lives with four columns simultaneously." That sentence elevates an activity report into a literature-aware answer.

Why this matters. Activity reports are open-ended and easily ignored. A student who treats this question seriously can earn full marks by adding a small but real classroom dataset and two or three sharp observations.

> **Final Answer:** A model classroom survey records, for five students, the languages they know and the languages they use at home, in the neighbourhood, in the city and at school. The expected finding for an Indian urban classroom is that every student operates in three or four languages, with English at school, a city *lingua franca* (Hindi/Tamil/Bengali, depending on the location), a mixed neighbourhood register and the mother tongue preserved mainly at home. The data illustrates, in a single page, the kind of layered linguistic life Daudet's Alsatian children were about to lose.

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Key Takeaways

- The story is set in Alsace under the Franco-Prussian War of 1870–71; a Berlin order has decreed that only German shall be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine.
- Franz, the narrator, arrives late expecting a scolding on participles and finds instead an unusually silent school, M. Hamel in Sunday best, and the village elders sitting on the back benches.
- M. Hamel announces this is the last French lesson and delivers a passionate defence of French as "the most beautiful language in the world", the language whose possession is "the key to their prison" for a conquered people.
- The whole school transforms into a public ceremony: old Hauser spells alongside the children, the class works in unprecedented silence, M. Hamel writes "Vive La France!" on the blackboard and dismisses the class with a gesture.
- Franz's feelings reverse: from boredom to longing for French, from fear of M. Hamel to deep respect ("I never saw him look so tall"), from indifference to books to treating them as "old friends".
- Themes: linguistic chauvinism vs mother-tongue patriotism; regret over wasted time; dignity of one's language; the community in the back row as keeper of shared identity.
- Symbols: the bulletin-board (medium of conquest), the Sunday clothes (the day as ceremony), old Hauser's primer (cross-generation loyalty), the flag-like "France, Alsace" copies, and the chalked "Vive La France!".

End of The Last Lesson NCERT Solutions