



Collegedunia NCERT Notes

The Ultimate NCERT Revision Guide for Class 12 English (Core) – Flamingo

The Last Lesson Class 12 Notes

Chapter 1 · Flamingo Prose · by Alphonse Daudet
NCERT 2026-27 Syllabus · 12th CBSE Board

Also see for this chapter: [NCERT Solutions](#)

Contents

1 Introduction and Chapter Snapshot

The Last Lesson by the French novelist Alphonse Daudet is the opening prose chapter of the Class 12 Flamingo textbook and one of the most-tested literature pieces in the CBSE board examination. The story unfolds on a single morning in the French district of Alsace, just after France's defeat in the Franco-Prussian War of 1870-71, when an order from Berlin replaces French with German in all schools of Alsace and Lorraine. Through the eyes of a reluctant schoolboy named Franz, Daudet shows how a community discovers, in one quiet classroom, that a mother tongue is not just a school subject but a homeland.

1.1 Author at a Glance

Alphonse Daudet (1840-1897) was a French novelist and short-story writer, best known for his short fiction set in the Provence region of southern France. *The Last Lesson* (1873) belongs to his collection *Contes du lundi* (Monday Tales), written in the immediate aftermath of the Franco-Prussian War. Daudet was not a soldier or a politician; he was a quiet, observant writer who turned the loss of his country into stories about ordinary people. The reader feels the patriot in him not through speeches but through small details: a teacher's silk cap, a chalk-written *Vive La France!*, the trumpet of returning Prussian soldiers.

Why this chapter matters in Class 12

- Sets the tone of the Flamingo prose section: human dignity under political loss.
- Frequently asked across all three CBSE board paper sections (objective, short answer, long answer).
- Acts as a gateway to themes that recur in *Lost Spring*, *Indigo*, and *The Rat-trap* – identity, displacement, and the moral awakening of an individual.

1.2 Story in One Breath

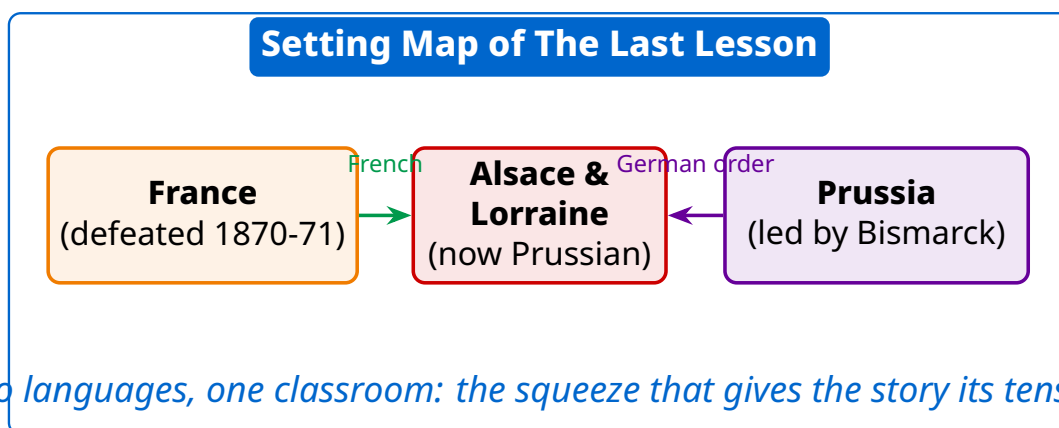
If you have five minutes before an exam, hold on to this single line: *a boy who almost ran away from school sits through what turns out to be the last French lesson his town will ever have, and grows up in those forty minutes.* Every theme, character and quotation in this chapter is anchored to that one shift in Franz from indifference to grief.

Five-Word Anchor

LATE – LAST – LANGUAGE – LOSS – LESSON. If you remember these five Ls in order, you can reconstruct the entire plot from the boy arriving late to the silent end of the lesson.

1.3 Setting at a Glance

The story is set in a village school in the French region of **Alsace**, close to the border of Germany, in the year **1870-71**. France has just been defeated by Prussia (led by Bismarck), and the districts of Alsace and Lorraine have passed into Prussian hands. The new rulers have ordered that only German shall be taught in the schools of these districts from the very next day. The action of the story takes place during the final French lesson before this order takes effect.



A Real Historical Wound

The Franco-Prussian War (July 1870 to May 1871) ended with France's surrender at Versailles. Under the Treaty of Frankfurt, the Alsace and most of Lorraine were annexed by the newly unified German Empire. For nearly fifty years – until the Treaty of Versailles in 1919 returned the region to France – French was banned in schools, street signs, and government offices of Alsace. Daudet is writing about a wound that was still bleeding when his readers first opened the book.

2 Plot Summary – Scene by Scene

The plot of *The Last Lesson* is deceptively simple. It happens in real time on a single morning, in three quiet arcs: the walk to school, the unexpected announcement, and the final lesson. Reading the story scene by scene helps you write any answer – 1-mark, 3-mark or 6-mark – without missing a beat.

2.1 Scene 1: A Reluctant Walk to School

Franz is very late. M. Hamel had warned the class that he would ask questions on **participles**, and Franz does not know the first word about them. For a moment he thinks of running away and spending the day in the open. The morning is warm and bright, the birds are chirping at the edge of the woods, and the Prussian soldiers are drilling in the open field behind the sawmill. The temptation is real, but Franz has “the strength to resist” and he hurries on to school.

On his way, he passes the town hall. A crowd has gathered in front of the **bulletin-board** – for the past two years, every piece of bad news has come from there: lost battles, the draft, orders of the commanding officer. Franz wonders, “What can be the matter now?” but does not stop. Wachter the blacksmith, who is reading the bulletin with his apprentice, calls out, “Don’t go so fast, bub; you’ll get to your school in plenty of time!” Franz thinks the blacksmith is making fun of him.

Foreshadowing in Scene 1

Three details in the walk quietly forecast the rest of the story. Spotting them is a favourite 3-mark prompt:

1. The **Prussian soldiers drilling** – the new rulers are already on French soil.
2. The **crowd at the bulletin-board** – a fresh order has just been issued.
3. The blacksmith’s words “**plenty of time**” – gently mocking, because Franz has all the time in the world today: there is no French lesson to be late for any more.

2.2 Scene 2: A Strange, Silent Classroom

Franz reaches M. Hamel's little garden out of breath. Usually the start of school is a "great bustle" – desks opening and closing, lessons repeated in unison, the teacher's ruler rapping on the table. Today everything is **as quiet as Sunday morning**. Through the window Franz sees his classmates already in their places and M. Hamel walking up and down with his terrible iron ruler under his arm. Franz has to open the door and walk in before everyone. He expects to be scolded.

Instead, M. Hamel says **very kindly**: "Go to your place quickly, little Franz. We were beginning without you." Franz climbs over the bench and sits down. Only when his fright passes does he notice that M. Hamel is wearing his **fine green coat, his frilled shirt, and the little black silk cap** that he wears only on inspection and prize days. He also notices something he has never seen before: on the back benches, which were always empty, the village elders are sitting quietly – **old Hauser** with his three-cornered hat, the former mayor, the former postmaster and several others. Old Hauser has brought an old primer, thumbled at the edges, which he holds open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.

2.3 Scene 3: The Thunderclap Announcement

While Franz is wondering about all this, M. Hamel mounts his chair and, in the same grave and gentle tone he had just used to Franz, addresses the class:

Key Quotation – The Announcement

"My children, this is the last lesson I shall give you. The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new master comes tomorrow. This is your last French lesson. I want you to be very attentive."

— M. Hamel | NCERT page 4

Franz calls these words a **thunderclap**. In one sentence the meaning of every odd detail of the morning – the silence, the elders, the silk cap, the bulletin-board – falls into place. The next moment is the most quoted reaction in CBSE answer sheets: "My last French lesson! Why, I hardly knew how to write!"

He suddenly regrets every wasted hour: birds' eggs, sliding on the Saar, books that had seemed a nuisance now appear as "old friends." And he understands at last why the old men of the village are sitting in school: they too are sorry that they had not come to school more, and have come today to thank M. Hamel for his forty years of faithful service.

2.4 Scene 4: The Last Lesson Itself

When Franz's turn comes to recite the rule of the participle, he stands tangled in the first words, his heart beating, not daring to look up. M. Hamel does not scold. He says, "I won't scold you, little Franz; you must feel bad enough" and goes on to give the class – and himself – a long, gentle confession. The trouble with Alsace, he says, has always been that everyone – pupils, parents, and teacher – has put off

learning till tomorrow. He blames himself, too: he has often sent Franz to water his flowers and given the class a holiday when he wanted to go fishing.

Then, in the most lyrical paragraph of the chapter, M. Hamel describes French as **“the most beautiful language in the world – the clearest, the most logical”** and says that as long as an enslaved people **hold fast to their language**, it is as if they have the key to their prison. He opens the grammar and reads them the lesson. Franz, listening as he has never listened before, is amazed at how much he understands.

After grammar comes writing. M. Hamel has prepared fresh copies for every desk – written in a beautiful round hand: **France, Alsace, France, Alsace**. They look like little flags floating in the schoolroom. The pupils write in absolute silence; only the scratching of pens can be heard. Some beetles fly in but nobody pays attention. From the roof the pigeons coo softly, and Franz wonders, “Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?”

2.5 Scene 5: “Vive La France!”

After writing comes history. The little ones chant their *ba, be bi, bo, bu*. At the back, old Hauser puts on his spectacles, holds the primer in both hands and spells the letters with them – you can see that he too is crying. His voice trembles with emotion. Franz says he will never forget it.

All at once the church-clock strikes twelve. The Angelus rings. At the same moment the trumpets of the Prussians, returning from drill, sound under the windows. M. Hamel stands up, very pale; Franz says, “I never saw him look so tall.”

Key Quotation – The Closing Gesture

“My friends,” said he, “I – I –” But something choked him. He could not go on. Then he turned to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk, and, bearing on with all his might, he wrote as large as he could – “Vive La France!” Then he stopped and leaned his head against the wall, and, without a word, he made a gesture to us with his hand – “School is dismissed – you may go.”

— Narrator (Franz) | NCERT page 8

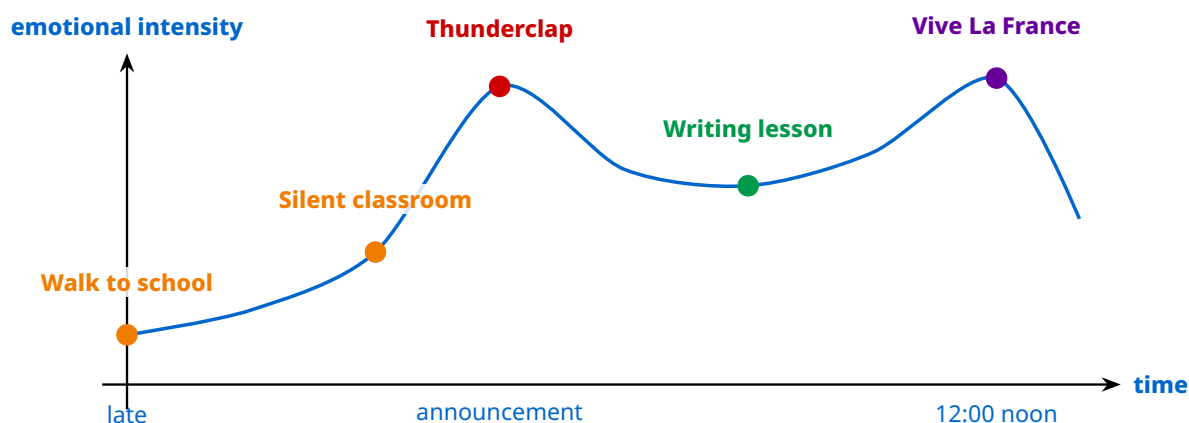
Plot Skeleton – the 5-S Hook

Saunter → **Silence** → **Shock** → **Sorrow** → **Signature**. Franz **saunters** late to school; finds the room in **silence**; the announcement is a **shock**; the lesson turns into **sorrow**; the chapter ends with the chalk **signature** “Vive La France!”.

2.6 Plot Arc – the Emotional Curve

Plotted as a curve of emotional intensity, the chapter rises slowly through the walk and the silent classroom, spikes at the thunderclap announcement, holds steady through the lesson itself, and rises again at the final chalk-mark. Re-drawing this

curve from memory is a high-value revision exercise.



Curve-question shortcut

If asked to comment on the “structure” or “shape” of the chapter, draw or describe this two-peak curve in the answer. Examiners reward visual thinking. The two peaks (thunderclap and *Vive La France*) frame the chapter’s emotional message.

3 Character Sketches

The Last Lesson is built around three figures – Franz, M. Hamel and old Hauser – supported by a silent chorus of village elders. Each character carries a different stage of awareness, so questions on characters almost always become questions on the chapter’s theme.

3.1 Franz – the Reluctant Narrator

Franz is a young schoolboy and the first-person narrator of the story. He is the lens through which the reader experiences both the village and its loss.

- **Childlike and easily distracted.** The first paragraph shows him tempted by birds, soldiers and the open field. He is afraid of being scolded and of M. Hamel’s iron ruler.
- **Honest about his faults.** He admits he does not know the rule of the participle. When asked to recite, he stands “mixed up on the first words.”
- **Capable of sudden growth.** The announcement turns him from a careless boy into a thoughtful observer. He sees, for the first time, that his books are “old friends,” that M. Hamel was never really cranky, and that the village men have come to school to thank their teacher.
- **Patriot in the making.** His final image of M. Hamel – “*I never saw him look so tall*” – is the voice of a boy who has just understood what his country means.

How Franz changes – a 3-point arc

(i) Indifference (walking to school, considering running away) → **(ii) Awareness** (noticing silk cap, elders, silent classroom) → **(iii) Empathy and pride** (regretting wasted time, feeling tall when M. Hamel stands tall).

3.2 M. Hamel – the Teacher of Forty Years

M. Hamel is the French teacher of the village. The reader meets him through Franz's eyes; in forty minutes he is transformed from a slightly feared schoolmaster into a tragic, dignified figure.

- **Strict at first sight.** Walks up and down with a *terrible iron ruler under his arm*; has been known to rap the table.
- **Gentle when it matters.** On the last day he speaks “very kindly” to Franz, refuses to scold him, and blames himself as much as the boy.
- **A man of habit and dignity.** He wears his green coat, frilled shirt and silk black cap – clothes reserved for inspection and prize days. The reader understands that he is honouring the lesson, not the inspectors.
- **Self-critical patriot.** He admits sending boys to water his flowers and giving holidays for fishing. He shares the blame with parents and pupils.
- **Devoted to French.** Calls it the most beautiful, clearest and most logical language and gives the speech about language being “the key to their prison.”
- **Eloquent in silence.** His broken “I – I –”, the chalk “*Vive La France!*”, and the wordless gesture say more than any sentence.

3.3 Old Hauser and the Village Elders

Old Hauser is the former mayor, postmaster, and a fixture of village life. He sits on the back bench with his three-cornered hat and an old primer thumbed at the edges. He represents the silent community choosing, on this last morning, to put themselves back into school.

- He **spells letters with the babies**, “*ba, be bi, bo, bu*”, voice trembling with emotion – a grown man learning the alphabet again as an act of devotion.
- His weeping is the moral barometer of the chapter. If a man like Hauser can cry over an alphabet, the loss of language is no small grief.
- He stands for an entire generation that took their language for granted and now wants to thank the teacher “*for his forty years of faithful service.*”

Why the elders come back to school

Across the world, when a community senses that its language is in danger, adults often return to language classes – Welsh evening schools in the 1960s, Maori *kura* in New Zealand, Cherokee language nests in the United States,

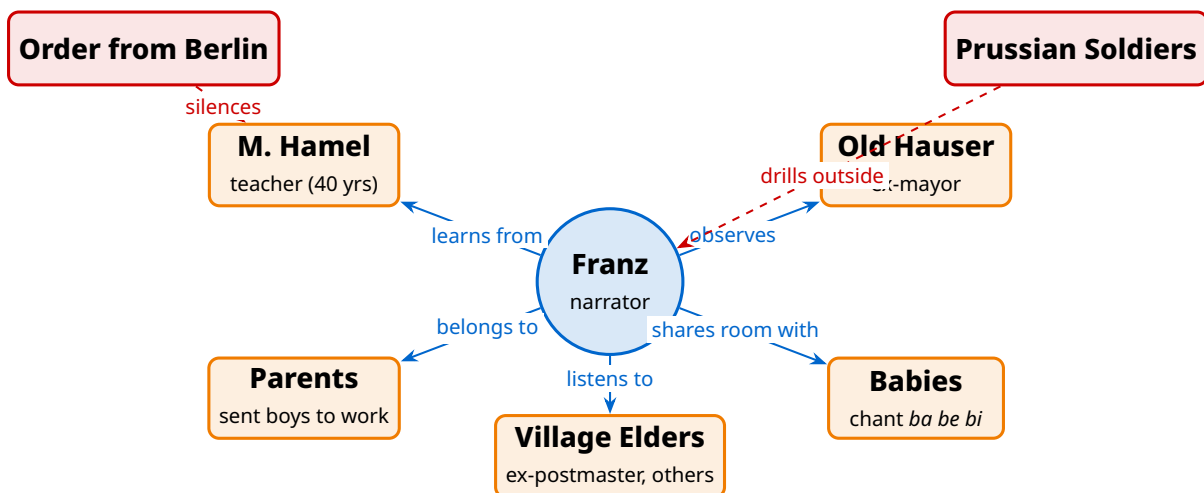
and many Indian tribal-language revival programmes. The village elders of Alsace do exactly the same thing, sixty years before such programmes had a name.

3.4 Minor Characters – Wachter, the Babies, the Pigeons

- **Wachter, the blacksmith**, calling out from the bulletin-board, introduces the announcement obliquely. His “plenty of time” is the first hint that something has changed.
- **The babies**, tracing fish-hooks and chanting *ba, be bi, bo, bu*, show that the loss of French will reach even those too young to read.
- **The pigeons cooing softly on the roof** are turned by Franz into a question: “Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?” – a child’s voice giving the political moment its sharpest line.

4 Character Relationships – a Concept Map

The chapter has only a handful of named characters, but they sit in three concentric layers: the narrator at the centre, the teacher and elders in the middle, the political force on the outside. The diagram below is useful for any 3-mark or 5-mark question that asks about the human “world” of the story.



5 Themes

The chapter packs four big ideas into a 12-page story. The CBSE board paper, the sample papers, and the Class 12 reference books all draw their 3-mark and 5-mark questions from this set.

5.1 Linguistic Identity – Language as Homeland

The central idea of *The Last Lesson* is that a mother tongue is not just a means of communication; it is the inner homeland of a community. M. Hamel's most-quoted sentence makes this explicit: as long as an enslaved people hold fast to their language, it is as if they have the key to their prison. When the order from Berlin removes French from the schools, it removes more than a subject – it removes the children's primary access to who they are.

How the story argues this theme

- Hauser brings a primer to school, not a sword.
- M. Hamel praises French as “the clearest, the most logical” language – love expressed through grammar.
- Franz fears that even the pigeons may be forced to “sing in German.”
- The chalk-written “Vive La France!” uses the French language to defy the German order, in the very act of being silenced.

5.2 Patriotism Without Slogans

Patriotism in this story is quiet, undramatic and very moving. Nobody shouts; nobody marches. The village shows its love of country by sitting on the back bench of a tiny schoolroom and listening to a teacher conjugate French verbs. M. Hamel's silk cap, the elders' silent attendance, Hauser's trembling voice, and the closing *Vive La France!* are all forms of patriotism that work because they are small. The CBSE examiner often rewards answers that describe patriotism as “a private act of attention rather than a public act of noise.”

5.3 The Pain of Last-Day Urgency – “We Always Had Plenty of Time”

M. Hamel's confession to the class – that the great trouble with Alsace is that everyone has put off learning until tomorrow – is the second major theme. The story is, in this sense, a moral fable about **procrastination at the level of a whole society**. Parents preferred to send their children to work in the farms or mills. The teacher himself gave holidays to go fishing. Now, on the last morning, every wasted day comes back as regret. The lesson is not just for Franz; it is for the village, and beyond it, for every reader.

Common Misreading

Many students write that M. Hamel is angry with the parents and pupils on the last day. This is the single most repeated error in board scripts. M. Hamel is **not angry**: he speaks “in the same grave and gentle tone,” he refuses to scold Franz, and he blames himself first – “*Have I not often sent you to water my flowers? ...And when I wanted to go fishing, did I not just give you a holiday?*”.

Read his outburst as **collective grief**, not personal anger.

5.4 Loss of Freedom – A Quiet War Story

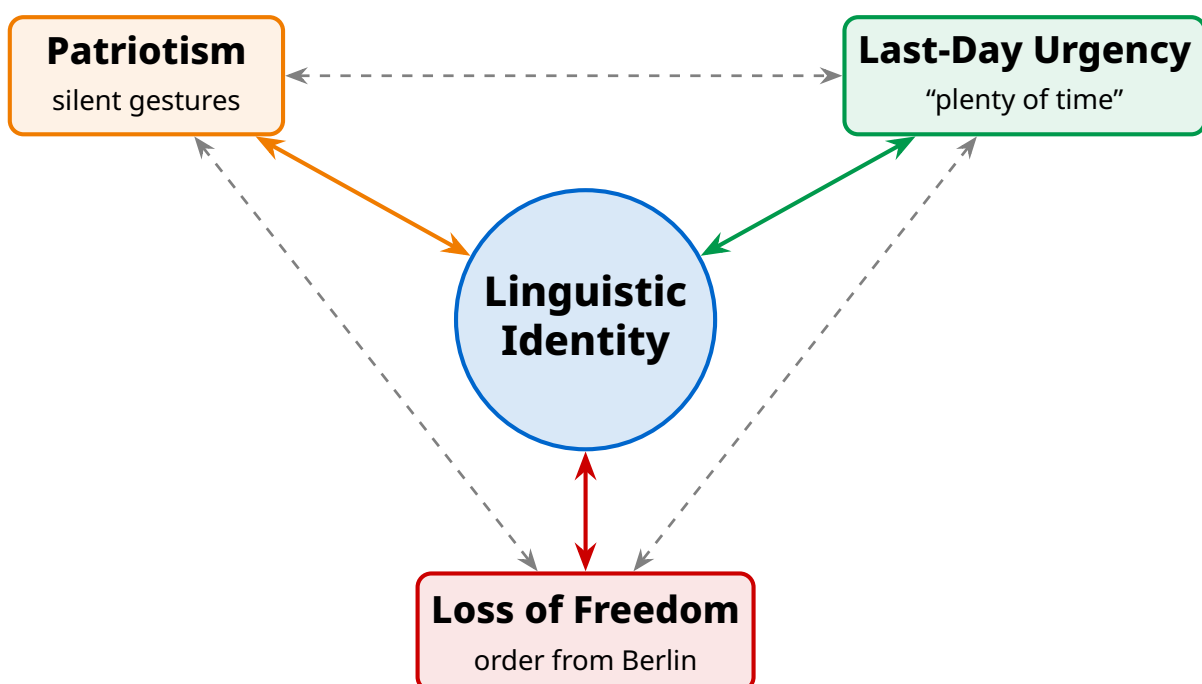
The Last Lesson is not a battlefield story. The war is offstage; the Prussian soldiers only drill in the field and march back at noon to the sound of trumpets. Yet every sentence rests on the fact that France has just lost a war and Alsace has just lost its freedom. Daudet’s point is that real defeat is felt not on the battlefield but in the schoolroom, the bakery, the bulletin-board – in the everyday spaces a community shares.

5.5 Teacher-Student Bond

The story is also a tribute to a kind of teaching that no longer exists in Franz’s town the next day. M. Hamel taught the same village for forty years. The hopvine he planted himself has climbed to the roof. The walnut-trees in his garden are taller now than when he came. By the end of the chapter, the narrator has stopped thinking of him as cranky and started thinking of him as tall.

5.6 Themes Web – How the Four Ideas Interlock

The four themes do not sit side by side; they hold each other up. The diagram below makes the interlock visible. **Linguistic identity** is the central thread; **patriotism** is its public face; **last-day urgency** is the private response; **loss of freedom** is the political pressure that sets the rest in motion.



6 Literary Devices and Narrative Technique

The Last Lesson reads simply, but Daudet uses a handful of carefully chosen techniques to give the story its emotional power. Naming these devices is worth easy marks in the objective and short-answer sections.

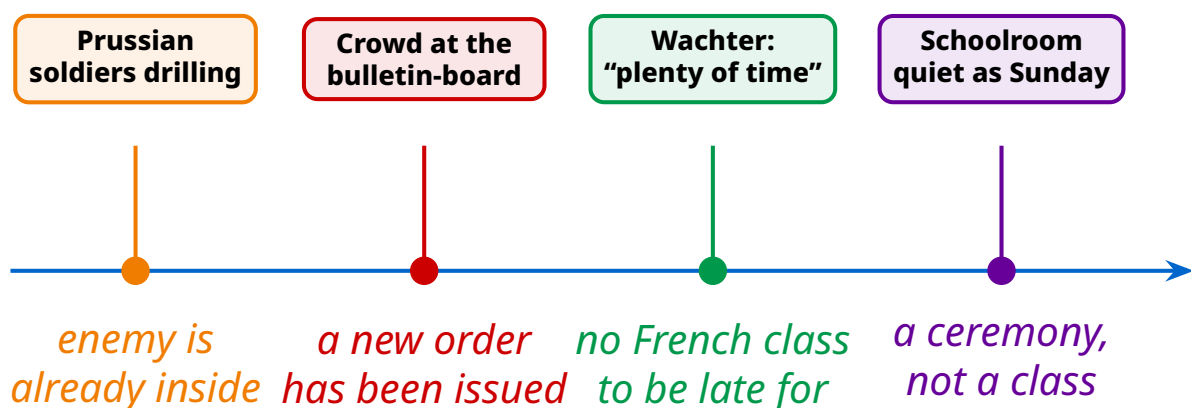
6.1 First-Person Narration through a Child

The story is narrated by Franz, a schoolboy. Daudet's choice is crucial: a child's voice allows the political content (annexation, language ban) to reach the reader through innocent details – the bulletin-board, the silk cap, the pigeons – rather than through political commentary. The reader feels the loss without being lectured to.

6.2 Foreshadowing

Daudet plants signals of the change in the very first pages: the Prussian soldiers drilling, the crowd at the bulletin-board, Wachter's words about "plenty of time," the unusual silence of the school. Each is harmless on its own; together they prepare the reader for the announcement.

Four foreshadowing markers on the walk to school



6.3 Symbolism

- **The silk black cap and green coat** – ceremonial respect for the language.
- **The iron ruler** – M. Hamel's strict reputation; notice that it never strikes anyone in this story.
- **The old primer thumbed at the edges** – Hauser's lifetime of letters that he never quite mastered.
- **"France, Alsace, France, Alsace"** written in round hand on the copies – the

lesson as a flag.

- **The pigeons cooing** – the natural, non-political world that even an empire cannot translate.
- **“Vive La France!” written in chalk** – the most defiant sentence in the chapter, written precisely because words have been forbidden.

6.4 Contrast

Daudet builds the story on a series of contrasts that any literary-devices question can be answered with:

Aspect	Usually (before today)	On the Last Day
Sound in the school-room	“Great bustle” – desks opening, lessons in unison, ruler rapping	“Quiet as Sunday morning”
M. Hamel’s tone	Strict; iron ruler under arm	Grave, gentle, kind
Back benches	Always empty	Filled with village elders
Franz’s attitude to books	A nuisance, too heavy to carry	“Old friends I couldn’t give up”
M. Hamel’s clothes	Working schoolmaster	Green coat, frilled shirt, silk cap

6.5 Imagery and Figurative Language

- **Simile:** “the copies...looked like little flags floating in the school-room.”
- **Metaphor:** “a thunderclap” (the announcement); “the key to their prison” (their language).
- **Auditory imagery:** the church-clock striking twelve, the Angelus, the Prussian trumpets – three competing sounds that close the lesson.
- **Visual imagery:** the silk cap, the chalk on the blackboard, the spectacles lying across Hauser’s primer.

6.6 The Title Itself

The Last Lesson is a deliberately double-edged title. On the surface it is the last French lesson Franz will ever take. Beneath the surface it is the last lesson the village – and the reader – needs to learn: that language is the soul of identity, and that what is taken for granted today can be lost overnight.

Title-question shortcut

For the very common board question “Justify the title ‘The Last Lesson’”: answer in three points – (1) literal last French lesson in the school, (2) M. Hamel’s last day as a teacher of forty years, (3) the last chance for the village to value its language. Each point earns roughly a mark in a 3-mark answer.

7 Key Quotations – a Memory Bank

The board paper rewards exact words from the text. The quotations below are the ones most often used by examiners as “pick out the line that means...” prompts, or as openers for 3-mark and 5-mark answers. Try to memorise the speaker, the page, and one quick comment for each.

7.1 Quotations from the Narrator (Franz)

Q1 - The Thunderclap

“What a thunderclap these words were to me!”

— Franz | NCERT page 4

Use it for: the moment of realisation; the shift from indifference to attention.

Q2 - Books as Old Friends

“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.”

— Franz | NCERT page 4

Use it for: the change of attitude towards learning when something is about to be lost.

Q3 - The Tall Teacher

“M. Hamel stood up, very pale, in his chair. I never saw him look so tall.”

— Franz | NCERT page 8

Use it for: the dignified climax; how grief gives a quiet man stature.

7.2 Quotations from M. Hamel

Q4 - The Language Speech

"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."

— M. Hamel | NCERT page 5

Use it for: the central thematic statement on language and freedom.

Q5 - Self-Blame

"Your parents were not anxious enough to have you learn...And I? I've been to blame also. Have I not often sent you to water my flowers instead of learning your lessons?"

— M. Hamel | NCERT page 5

Use it for: M. Hamel as a self-critical patriot; the theme of collective responsibility.

Q6 - The Final Word

"Vive La France!"

— written by M. Hamel on the blackboard | NCERT page 8

Use it for: the chapter's closing image; defiance through language at the very moment the language is forbidden.

8 Background and Historical Context

A short historical note is essential for any 5-mark answer that asks "Why did M. Hamel say this is the last lesson?" The CBSE syllabus does not require students to learn military history, but it does reward a paragraph that places the story in its real time.

8.1 The War in Brief

- **July 1870:** France, under Emperor Napoleon III, declares war on Prussia (then led by Otto von Bismarck).
- **September 1870:** France's army is decisively defeated at the Battle of Sedan; the emperor is captured. The Second Empire collapses; the Third Republic is declared in Paris.
- **January 1871:** Paris falls after a long siege. The German Empire is proclaimed at the Hall of Mirrors in Versailles.
- **May 1871:** The Treaty of Frankfurt is signed. France pays a heavy indemnity and **cedes Alsace and the eastern half of Lorraine** to the new German Empire.

8.2 The Language Policy

After the annexation, the German government in Berlin issued orders to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. French street signs were replaced. Newspapers shifted to German. Place-names were Germanised: Strasbourg became Straßburg, Mulhouse became Mülhausen. *The Last Lesson* captures the day before this policy took effect inside the classroom.

Linguistic chauvinism – the textbook’s own term

The NCERT exercise asks: “Do you know what ‘linguistic chauvinism’ means?” Linguistic chauvinism is the belief that one’s own language is superior to all others, often combined with hostility to speakers of other tongues. The story warns against *any* version of it – whether imposed from outside (Berlin’s order) or carried inside (M. Hamel’s own claim that French is the most beautiful language in the world).

8.3 The Indian Parallel

Closer home, the chapter is often paired with India’s own debates on language. The Indian Constitution – through Articles 29 and 30 – protects the right of linguistic minorities to conserve their language and to establish institutions in their own medium. The Three-Language Formula (1968, re-affirmed in NEP 2020) tries to balance the mother tongue, Hindi and English in the classroom. Examiners often expect students to make this connection in 5-mark questions on linguistic identity.

Punjabis in Bangalore, Tamilians in Mumbai

The textbook’s own exercise asks what happens to a Punjabi family in Bangalore or a Tamilian family in Mumbai. They typically keep their mother tongue alive at home, attend community gatherings (associations, places of worship, cultural festivals) and study their language at supplementary classes or online platforms. The strategies are quiet – exactly like the strategies of M. Hamel’s village.

9 Exam Pattern Points – CBSE Board Question Bank

The board examination treats *The Last Lesson* across three question types: 1-mark MCQs and very-short-answers (Section A), 3-mark short answers (Section B), and 5- or 6-mark long answers (Section C). The lists below capture the prompts that have repeated most often across recent board papers, sample papers and Delhi/All-India sets.

9.1 Most-Asked 1-Mark Prompts (Section A)

1. Who is the author of *The Last Lesson*? (*Alphonse Daudet*)
2. In which year is the story set? (*1870-71, just after the Franco-Prussian War*)
3. Which two districts of France passed into Prussian hands? (*Alsace and Lorraine*)
4. Why was Franz in great dread of going to school that morning? (*M. Hamel was to question the class on participles*)
5. What was M. Hamel wearing on his last day? (*green coat, frilled shirt, little black silk cap*)
6. Who came and sat on the back benches of the schoolroom that day? (*old Hauser, the former mayor, the former postmaster and other village elders*)
7. What did M. Hamel write on the blackboard at the end of the lesson? (*Vive La France!*)
8. What did Franz hear from the roof during the writing lesson? (*the pigeons cooing*)

9.2 Frequent 3-Mark Prompts (Section B)

1. Why was Franz tempted to stay away from school that day? What stopped him?
2. What changes did the order from Berlin cause in the village school?
3. How did Franz's feelings about M. Hamel and school change in one morning?
4. Why did the village elders attend the last lesson? What did their presence mean?
5. What does the title *The Last Lesson* suggest about the story?
6. How does M. Hamel describe the French language? Why?
7. Discuss two examples of foreshadowing in the opening pages of the story.

9.3 Long 5/6-Mark Prompts (Section C)

1. "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." Discuss this remark with reference to the story.
2. Draw a character sketch of M. Hamel. How does he change in the eyes of Franz over the course of the lesson?
3. Patriotism in *The Last Lesson* is shown not through slogans but through quiet gestures. Discuss with examples.
4. How does Alphonse Daudet use the figure of the schoolboy narrator to bring out the loss of an entire community?
5. "The chapter is as much about procrastination as it is about patriotism." Justify with reference to M. Hamel's confession.
6. Imagine you are Franz, writing a diary entry on the night of the last lesson. Write the entry in about 120-150 words. (*Creative writing prompt; HOTS*)

Long-answer template – the 4-paragraph build

P1: Anchor the answer in one quotation from the chapter (use Q1–Q6 from the memory bank). **P2:** Give two textual examples that support your point. **P3:** Connect to a theme (language, patriotism, last-day urgency). **P4:** Close with the chapter’s larger meaning – one sentence linking it to the reader’s world. Most 5-mark answers that score 5/5 in CBSE Class 12 English follow exactly this shape.

Common Misreading

A frequent error in long answers is to call M. Hamel “a Prussian teacher” or to imagine the story is set inside Germany. M. Hamel is **French**, the village is **French**, and the action happens **on the last French day** before the German order takes effect. Always begin the answer with this geographic anchor; many marks are lost when the answer floats free of place.

9.4 Value-Based and HOTS Prompts

1. “We always had plenty of time”: what does the chapter teach you about postponing what truly matters?
2. Compare M. Hamel as a teacher with the way teachers are described in any other prose chapter you have read this year.
3. Write a notice for your school bulletin-board announcing a “Mother Tongue Week.”
4. Argumentative paragraph (100 words): for or against the proposition that “every Indian child must study at least three languages.”

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10 Common Mistakes – a Quick Audit

The pitfalls below are taken from teachers’ notes on the most common board-script errors for this chapter. Tick each one off before you walk into the examination.

Common Mistake – the silk-cap detail

Many candidates write that M. Hamel always wore the silk cap. He did not: he wore it only on **inspection and prize days**. On the last lesson he wears it to honour the language, not the inspector.

Common Mistake - the iron ruler

A common misreading is that M. Hamel “raps Franz with the iron ruler.” He does not. The ruler is mentioned for his reputation, not for his action. On this morning he speaks “very kindly.”

Common Mistake - mixing up Alsace and Lorraine with Berlin

Students sometimes write that the order banned French in Berlin. The order came **from** Berlin (the German capital) and was **applied to** Alsace and Lorraine (French districts now under German rule). Get the geography right; the rest of the answer follows.

11 Quick Revision – Five-Minute Recap

If you have only five minutes before the examination, read this section. It is the smallest amount of the chapter that still answers any question.

11.1 One-Line Plot

A boy who almost runs away from school sits through the last French lesson his town will ever have, and discovers in forty minutes what his language, his teacher and his country mean.

11.2 Three Characters

Franz – careless schoolboy who grows up in a morning.

M. Hamel – French teacher of forty years; strict by reputation, gentle on the last day, dignified at the end.

Old Hauser – ex-mayor; brings an old primer; sits on the back bench; weeps as he spells letters with the babies.

11.3 Four Themes

- **Linguistic identity** – a mother tongue is a homeland.
- **Patriotism without slogans** – silent gestures that say more than speeches.
- **Last-day urgency / collective procrastination** – “we always had plenty of time.”
- **Loss of freedom** – the war reaches the schoolroom before the soldiers do.

11.4 Six Must-Quote Lines

1. “What a thunderclap these words were to me!”

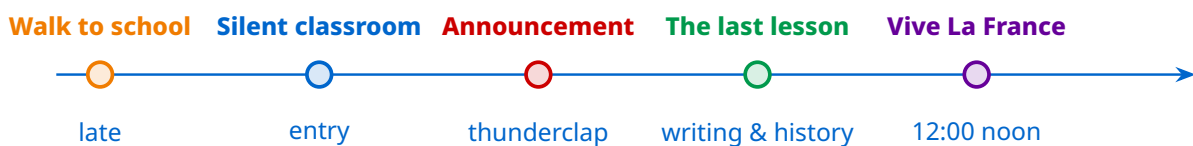
2. "My books ...were old friends now that I couldn't give up."
3. "I never saw him look so tall."
4. "When a people are enslaved ...they had the key to their prison."
5. "We've all a great deal to reproach ourselves with."
6. "Vive La France!"

11.5 One Diagram to Re-draw on Rough Paper

The three-block setting map (France → Alsace & Lorraine ← Prussia) tells you the geography in three boxes. If you can re-draw it, you can answer any question on context.

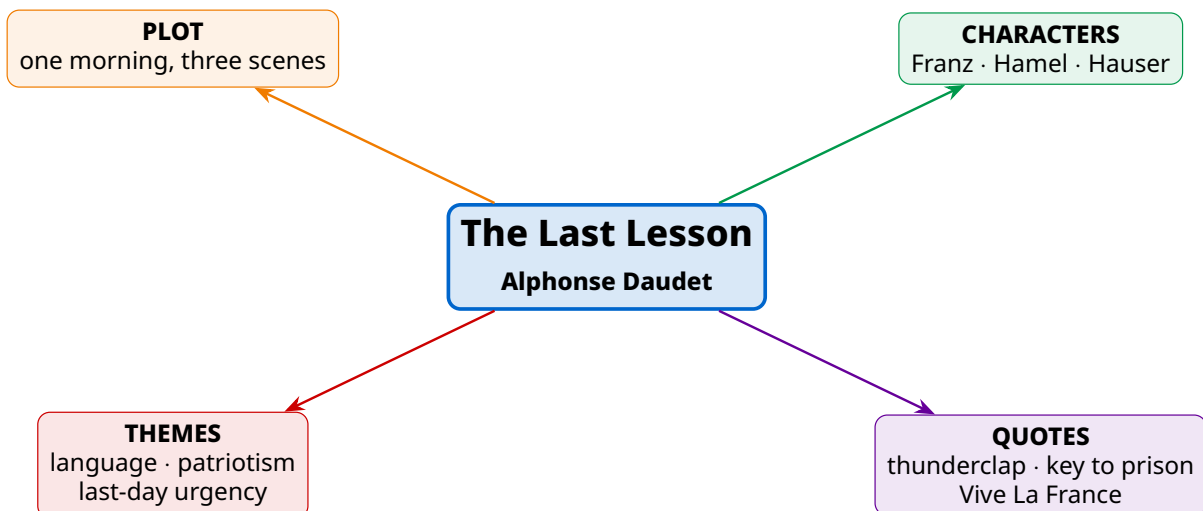


11.6 Time Line of the Last Morning



12 Concept Map – The Whole Chapter at a Glance

Use this diagram for the final pass through your revision. It links plot, character, theme and quotation in one frame.



The 4-Q Recall

Qotation → **Q**uietness → **Q**uestion-of-language → **Q**uick-vanishing-time. If a board question makes you blank, ladder up from a quotation to the chapter's quietness, then to its question about language, then to its theme of vanishing time. One of the four will fit the question.

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