

English Literature

The last lesson

Q1. Word meanings

M.	short form of monsieur, the French word for ‘mister’
Drilling	training; practicing drills
Draft	the order to join the army
Bub	a rude word for ‘boy’
Primer	a book to teach young children how to read
The Saar	a river on the border of France and Germany
Reproach	blame or criticize
Hold fast to	never give up using
Their language	their mother tongue
Hopvine	a type of climber
The Angelus	a bell used for Christian prayers
Vive La France!	Long live France!

Q2. Tick the most appropriate options.

1. Franz was embarrassed when he entered the class because
Ans. There were all kinds of people in the class.
2. M. Hamel wore his Sunday clothes for his last lesson because
Ans. He wanted to mark the special day as it was his last class.
3. Franz wished he could recite the rule of participles correctly because
Ans. He wished he had learnt it well.
4. Franz and his classmates wanted to laugh and cry when Houser spelled the letters because
Ans. It was both funny and sad to see him in class reciting with the letters.

Q3. Answer the followings

1. *Oh, the wretches; that was what they had put up at the town hall!*
 - a. Who does the *wretches* refer to?
Ans. The Germans are referred as wretches here.
 - b. What had they put up at the town hall?
Ans. they had put up an order at the town hall that to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine.
2. *I was amazed to see how well I understood it.*
 - a. Why was Franz amazed?

Ans. Franz was amazed because he understood the grammar lessons very well.

b. Why did Franz understand it?

Ans. Franz understood it because he listened so carefully.

3. Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?

a. Who is *they*?

Ans. Pigeons are referred as *they*.

b. Why does Franz think this?

Ans. This shows the patriotic fervour and love of French people for their mother tongue. Even a small boy like Franz was very upset at the fact that he would be deprived of his own language. He wondered if the pigeons would also be made to sing in German. In fact, it is a remark on the hollowness of man's authority. Man can exert authority only on human beings, but not on nature.

4. What bustle could normally be heard when school began?

Ans. Franz was late for the school that day. But he was quite confident to enter the class unnoticed because usually there was a lot of confusion and noise in the beginning of the school. Every day there was a sound of opening and closing of desks, lessons repeated in unison and teacher's great ruler rapping on the table. So Franz thought that he would take the advantage of the situation and enter the class unnoticed.

5. In what way had the classroom changed in the forty years that M. Hamel had been teaching?

Ans. For forty years M. Hamel had been there in the same place, with his garden outside the window and his class in front of him. Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth; the walnut trees in the garden were taller, and the hopvine that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof.

6. Why were Franz and the old men of the village sorry? Were they sorry for the same reasons?

Ans. Franz and the old men of the village were sorry because it was their last lesson in French. The order from Berlin brought a sense of shock and surprise in the class. As per the order, this was the last French class. This made all the distinguished village elders feel guilty of ignoring their mother tongue. So, they all came to the class to show their love and respect for their mother tongue and French teacher M. Hamel. The entire school was filled with an air of sorrow and regret. There was complete silence.