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Class 12 English - The Last Lesson (Complete Notes & Question Bank)

Chapter Summary & Detailed Explanation

The Last Lesson by Alphonse Daudet is set during the Franco-Prussian War (1870-71) when Alsace and Lorraine were annexed by Prussia. The story reflects the importance of one's mother tongue, patriotism, and the regret of neglecting education.

Franz, a young boy, is reluctant to attend school as he is unprepared for the lesson on participles. However, he notices an unusual silence and solemnity in the classroom. M. Hamel, the French teacher, announces that this is their last French lesson as German will replace French in schools due to the Berlin order. Villagers attend the class to show respect and regret neglecting their language.

M. Hamel passionately teaches, emphasizing the significance of French as a key to freedom and identity. He blames both himself and the villagers for neglecting education. The story ends with him writing 'Vive La France!' on the board, symbolizing love and defiance.

Exam-Oriented Question Bank

Section A: Multiple Choice Questions

1. Who is the author of 'The Last Lesson'?
 - a) R.K. Narayan
 - b) Alphonse Daudet ✓
 - c) Guy de Maupassant
 - d) William Wordsworth

2. What was Franz expected to learn that day?
 - a) Composition
 - b) Conjugations
 - c) Participles ✓

d) Punctuation

3. Which regions were annexed by Prussia?

- a) Alsace and Lorraine ✓
- b) Bordeaux and Paris
- c) Normandy and Brittany
- d) Dunkirk and Nice

4. What was written on the blackboard at the end?

- a) Learn German
- b) Vive La France! ✓
- c) Goodbye Students
- d) Franz, Study Hard

5. What symbolizes freedom in the story?

- a) German soldiers
- b) Pigeons cooing ✓
- c) The church bell
- d) Blacksmith Wachter

Section B: Short Answer Questions (30–50 words)

Q: Why was Franz reluctant to go to school?

A: Franz was unprepared for the lesson on participles and feared scolding from M. Hamel. He preferred to enjoy the outdoors and watch soldiers drill rather than study.

Q: What unusual things did Franz notice in the classroom?

A: The classroom was unusually silent like a Sunday. M. Hamel wore his best green coat, and village elders sat quietly at the back, showing respect and regret.

Q: What was the Berlin order, and how did it affect the people?

A: The Berlin order mandated that only German would be taught in Alsace and Lorraine. It made the people realize the importance of their mother tongue, filling them with regret.

Q: Why did M. Hamel blame himself and the villagers?

A: He blamed himself for leniency in teaching and the villagers for neglecting education, realizing their value of French only when it was too late.

Q: Explain the meaning of: 'Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?'

A: It shows Franz's emotional outburst against oppression. He feels freedom and nature cannot be subdued by force, symbolized by the pigeons cooing freely.

Section C: Long Answer Questions (120–150 words)

Q: Discuss the central theme of 'The Last Lesson'.

A: The story highlights the importance of one's mother tongue, patriotism, and regret of neglecting education. After Alsace and Lorraine were annexed by Prussia, Berlin ordered German to replace French in schools. M. Hamel's last lesson becomes a symbol of cultural resistance. Franz realizes the value of French, and villagers silently repent. M. Hamel's emotional farewell underlines that language is a key to freedom and identity. Moral: We should respect and preserve our language before it is lost.

Q: Describe M. Hamel's character transformation during his last lesson.

A: M. Hamel, once strict, becomes gentle and emotional in his last lesson. He passionately teaches French and acknowledges his own and the villagers' negligence. His farewell, with 'Vive La France!' on the board, symbolizes patriotism and cultural pride.

Q: How does 'The Last Lesson' show the theme of realization and regret?

A: Franz and the villagers realize the value of French only when it is about to be taken away. Franz regrets wasting time, and villagers silently repent their negligence. M. Hamel also blames his own leniency. The story teaches that people often realize the value of their culture and education too late.