

**ANNUAL PREPARATORY PROGRAMME FOR ENHANCEMENT IN
ACADEMICS AND REVISION (APPEAR)
CLASS XII, ENGLISH CORE - 301
MODULE - IX (THE LAST LESSON)**

Module Detail	
Subject Name	English Core
Course Name	Annual Preparatory Programme for Enhancement in Academics and Revision (APPEAR) in English for Class XII
Module Name/Title	The Last Lesson
Module Id	lefl_10101
Pre-requisite	Knowledge about war, knowledge of Past Simple (Narration)
Learning Outcomes	<p>After carefully reading this module and doing the suggested activities, you will:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • comprehend the story and answer the questions, • use the vocabulary learnt in variety of contexts, • answer comprehension questions from the text, and • tell the story in sequence with appropriate tone and diction, and • learn and describe the effects of war on education.
Keywords	War, soldier, school, French, German

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INTRODUCTION

- Have you watched any war related movie? Name the movies.
Let's go back to a war situation from History and think of the following:
- What happens when a King conquers a kingdom after a war?
Tick mark the possible consequences of a defeat in a War.

War prisoners	
Thousands of death	
Merger of Kingdoms	
Killing of King	
Changes in religion	
Changes in language	
All in the defeated country/kingdom are killed	
Autocracy of the victorious king	
Change in education	

In fact, many illogical things happen after a Kingdom/Country is conquered. Here, we have a heart-rending story related to war. The story "The Last Lesson" by French Novelist Alphonse Daudet reads the effect of a lost war on a school.

Warm-up Activity

Guess what might have happened to the Schools in France after Prussia conquered France. Tick mark the options given below.

School might have been closed.	
School might have been demolished.	
All teachers might have been changed.	
All the textbooks might have been changed.	
Language of school/ teaching might have been changed.	

Listen and Answer

Click the following link to listen to the Audio and try to look for answers to the questions in the box.

<https://ciet.nic.in/pages.php?id=flamingo&ln=en>

Who is the narrator of the story?

What is the story about?

What problem does the school face after France gets defeated in the war?

Who all attended the school apart from students on the last day?

Why is it called the last lesson?

Let's go into the story to know what happened to a school in France when Prussia (Germany) conquered France.

Franz hurried to school and was in great dread of scolding as he had not done the grammar homework assigned by M. Hamel, the teacher. The warm weather outside, birds' chirping and even the drilling of Prussian soldiers looked more interesting to him than sitting in the grammar class. He passed through the town hall where there was a crowd around the bulletin-board. He continued towards the school without paying any heed to the board as it always featured bad news like lost war or some command. Seeing him hurrying, the watcher advised him to go slow and opined that he would have plenty of time now.

He arrived at school and was surprised to find it still and silent unlike other days when there would be a great bustle with all kinds of noises. It was not a holiday but shockingly, school was as quite as a Sunday morning. Doubly scared, he approached the classroom where M. Hamel was there.

Franz was further taken aback when the teacher allowed him kindly without scolding for being late.

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Activity-1

Read the text and infer/find out the meanings of the underlined words/phrases.

Franz was in great dread of scolding as he had not done the grammar homework. He liked the chirping of birds more than the grammar lesson. When he arrived, he found the school silent. Otherwise, school is generally found in a great bustle.

Think about the following before going ahead...

Why was the school dead silent unlike the normal days?

Settling down in the class, he was further surprised seeing the teacher in his best dress which he wore only on special occasions like inspection or prize days. Further shocking for him was the presence of some old people like old Hauser, former mayor, post master and others at the back side of the classroom.

Then suddenly, M. Hamel announced in his grave tone that it was the last lesson and that order had come from Berlin to stop teaching French as German would be taught in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine thereon. That was heartbreaking. Franz was suddenly sad even though he did not like the classes earlier. He was sad as he had not even learnt writing and that was the end. He would not be able to learn the language anymore. He was also sad for the fact that M. Hamel would go away forever and this realization made him forget how cranky he was.

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Activity-2

Based on your reading and understanding so far, mark True (T) or False (F).

- A. M. Hamel was on his best dress as it was an inspection day. ()
- B. Mayor and Post master were there to show gratitude. ()
- C. It was his last lesson because he wanted to go back to Berlin. ()

D. Franz was sad as his favourite teacher M. Hamel was going. ()

E. M. Hamel was a kind person as per Franz. ()

M. Hamel had put on his special clothes honouring the last session. The old men of the village also sat there in honour of the old teacher. It was their way to show their gratitude for his 40 years of service.

He started teaching. He called Franz to recite a portion of the text but he could not recite. He did not scold for his failure and said, “You must feel bad enough for failing to do so”. He blamed our laid back attitude because of which we thought that we had a lot of time and that we would learn later. He pointed out that the land of Alsace had the same problem of postponing the learning for tomorrow and thus taken over by Prussian. Then he blamed their parents and even himself for putting learning to the back seat and prioritizing other things like household works and holidays. Then, he glorified French language saying how beautiful, clear and logical language it is.

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Activity-3

As per the text above, what was M. Hamel trying to do? Mark the right answers.

Scold people for coming late	Scold people for failing to recite	Scold the villagers for not learning	Make them aware of the laid back attitude
Blame parents for making learning secondary	Tell the story of Prussian’s conquest	Blame self for using the students otherwise	Appreciating French language
Tell them to learn German quickly	Revolt against German language	Stop using French	Offend the villagers

“When people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their own language, it is like they had the key to their prison,” M. Hamel said while talking about importance of French for them. Then, he taught a grammar lesson and Franz, for the first time, understood it all so easily. Probably he had

never listened to him seriously or the teacher had not taught so nicely before. It looked like he wanted to teach everything he knew as he was teaching for one last time. He, then, took up a writing lesson for which he supplied the students with copies with France and Alsace written on it. Whole class was motivated like never before to complete the task. Hearing a pigeon cooing during the silence, Franz thought the pigeon would be forced to coo in German language. In the silence, Franz observed his teacher sitting motionless, gazing at something blankly.

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Activity-4

Tick mark the sentences those indicate that M. Hamel was deeply sad with Government's decision of switching to German language.

1. () He used the word 'enslaved'.
2. () His decision to teach a grammar lesson.
3. () He taught grammar nicely.
4. () He wanted to teach everything he knew.
5. () He taught a writing lesson after grammar.
6. () He gave copies with France & Alsace written on it beautifully.
7. () He sat motionless in the class.
8. () All students completed the task with great motivation
9. () He kept gazing at something blankly.

M. Hamel has spent 40 years there in the school. He has seen the garden beside his classroom growing. Now it must have been painful to leave all those behind. While he was taking the last lesson, his sister was busy packing their belonging as they must leave the country the next day. M. Hamel took up a History lesson after teaching writing and then a pronunciation session. All the old people seated at the back were on tears. It looked like he wanted to teach till the last possible minute. The clock struck 12 and the Prussian trumpets were blown. Finally, M. Hamel stood up, wanted to address the class but choked after saying 'My friends'. But he took a chalk and wrote "VIVE LA FRANCE" in large letters on the board.

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Activity-5

Search the meaning of the phrase “Vive La France” and imagine the emotions with which M. Hamel might have written it as last message in the last lesson.

Activity-6

Arrange the following sentences sequentially to get a summary of what we have discussed so far. Just write the corresponding numbers.

I	Franz was allowed into the class kindly. He didn't get scolded.
II	Villagers were there to honour him for his 40 years of service.
III	Further surprising was seeing the old people from the village seated at the back benches.
IV	He talked about laid back attitude of people for learning and blamed the students, parents and even himself for neglecting the learning of French.
V	Franz got to school late and got surprised to find the school still and silent
VI	Finally, he stood up and wrote in big letters, “Vive La France” meaning Long live France.
VII	He was surprised seeing the teacher on his special dress.
VIII	He glorified French language and taught three lessons back to back as if he wanted to teach everything he knew for one last time.
IX	M. Hamel announced that it was his Last Lesson as French would no more be taught.
X	He taught till the Clock struck 12 and the Prussian trumpets were blown.

Match your answer with the paragraph below.

LET US SUM UP

In this module, we discussed a heart-breaking story of an old teacher leaving a school and country as it was decided by the new Govt. to stop teaching French. In the story, Franz, a school going child, who is hesitant to go to school as he had not done the homework, rushes to school unwilling

and scared. Franz got to school late and was surprised to find the school still and silent. Otherwise, the school always bustled with noise. He was scared about getting late but he was allowed into the class kindly. Settling down, he was surprised seeing the teacher on his special dress which he wore only on special occasions. Further surprising for him was to see the old people from the village seated at the back benches.

M. Hamel announced that it was his Last Lesson as French would no more be taught and German would be taught there on as Prussia had defeated them in war. He wanted to teach a last lesson and villagers were there to honour him for his 40 years of service. He was pained that people neglected French. He glorified French language and taught three lessons back-to-back as if he wanted to teach everything, he knew for one last time. He taught till the Clock struck 12 and the Prussian trumpets were blown. Finally, he stood up and wrote in big letters, “Vive La France” meaning “Long live France”.

ANSWERS

Activity-2

- A. F
- B. T
- C. F
- D. F
- E. F

Activity-3

Scold people for coming late	Scold people for failing to recite	Scold the villagers for not learning	Make them aware of the laid back attitude
Blame parents for making learning secondary	Tell the story of Prussian’s conquest	Blame self for using the students otherwise	Appreciating French language

Tell them to learn German quickly	Revolt against German language	Stop using French	Offend the villagers
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Activity-4

1. (✓) He used the word 'enslaved'.
2. () His decision to teach a grammar lesson.
3. () He taught grammar nicely.
4. (✓) He wanted to teach everything he knew.
5. () He taught a writing lesson after grammar.
6. (✓) He gave copies with France & Alsace written on it beautifully.
7. (✓) He sat motionless in the class.
8. () All students completed the task with great motivation
9. (✓) He kept gazing at something blankly.

Activity-6

V, I, VII, III, IX, II, IV, VIII, X, VI

REFERENCES

National Council of Educational Research & Training. Ed. *Flemingo. Textbook for Class XII* (2007). NCERT Publication.

Audio book by CIET <https://ciet.nic.in/pages.php?id=flamingo&ln=en>

PRACTICE QUESTIONS

1. Why did M. Hamel teach all the things in the last lesson?
2. Why was M. Hamel upset with people in the story "The Last Lesson"?
3. Why was M. Hamel sad on his last day in the school?