
1. The Last Lesson

Understanding The Text:

Q1. The people in this story suddenly realise how precious their language is to them. What shows you this? Why does this happen?

Answer: The French districts of Alsace and Lorraine had fallen into Prussian hands, according to the story. As a result, they received an order from Berlin mandating that only German be taught in Alsace and Lorraine schools. It was at that point that they all realized the importance of their language. The usual commotion at school was replaced by the peace of Sunday church. The students' sincerity was evident by the fact that they all began working quietly. The only sound in the room was the scratching of pens across the paper. Even the villagers came in and sat quietly as students in the class. Everyone appeared to be depressed. M. Hamel, who was otherwise disliked, instilled in the students a sense of regret. Franz regretted not paying close attention to him, whereas M. Hamel, who was heartbroken at the prospect of leaving, had never explained everything with such patience. He almost seemed to want to tell them everything he knew before leaving. In his words, he adequately captured the mood. 'We all have a lot of things to be ashamed of.'

Q2. Franz thinks, “Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?” What could this mean?

Answer: Franz’s question about whether pigeons can sing in German demonstrates that humans can impose their will on other humans but cannot impose it on nature. It suggests that human power is always limited. They cannot have complete control over the world. Similarly, Prussians can control their schools and learning patterns, but they cannot kill their pride in their country and language.

Talking About The Text:

Q1. “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?

Answer: “When people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language it is as if they had the key to their prison.” Examples of conquered people having their language taken away or having a language imposed on them can be found throughout history.

1. Imposition of English in India during colonization by Britain.
2. Imposition of Chinese in Tibet

3. Arabization in North Africa (imposition of Islam and so, imposition of Muslim languages)

4. Imposition of French in Britain (Francization)

5. Turkish imposed on Kurds

Q2. 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

Answer: In any state, the linguistic minority is easily identified and faces the same discrimination as religious, social, or ethnic minorities.

However, there is a significant disparity between the treatment meted out and the level of acceptance displayed by the majority community in that region. Some cities, such as Delhi and Mumbai, have a cosmopolitan outlook.

The linguistic minority attempts to preserve its identity through intimate contact, interaction, and language preservation in social gatherings, family functions, and regional festivals. Adherence to social customs and traditions in family gatherings and women's meetings fosters unity among members of the linguistic minority. In a nutshell, they have built a mini-Punjab in Bangalore, a mini-Chennai in Mumbai, a mini-Bangalore in Delhi, and a mini-Surat in Kolkata.

**Q3. Is it possible to carry pride in one's language too far?
Do you know what 'linguistic chauvinism' means?**

Answer: People often take quite enough pride in their native tongues and repress others. This is incorrect as we should treat all languages and cultures equally.

Linguistic chauvinism refers to a person's excessive pride in their native language. Being overly aggressive and fanatical about one's language is referred to as carrying pride.

Working with words:

Q1. English is a language that contains words from many other languages. This inclusiveness is one of the reasons it is now a world language, For example:

petite – French

kindergarten – German

capital – Latin

democracy – Greek

bazaar – Hindi

Find out the origins of the following words.

tycoon barbecue zero

tulip veranda ski

logo robot trek

bandicoot

Answer:

Tycoon – It originated from the Japanese word "taikun", which means great lord.

Barbecue – It originated from the Caribbean word "barbacoa", which refers to a wooden structure used to cook.

Meat – It has Germanic origins.

Zero – The word zero has French origins but it originated from Arabic 'cipher'.

Tulip – It originated from French but has its origins in Persian dulband means flower shaped turban.

Veranda – It originated from Hindi 'baranda' which means railing.

Ski – Norwegian 'snowshoe'

Logo – It has its origins in Greek logos means 'imprint'

Robot – It originated from Czech word 'forced labour'

Trek – South African word means to travel in Dutch

Bandicoot – Telugu word pandikokku, means pig-rat

2. 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!"

The words were

-
- (i) loud and clear.
 - (ii) startling and unexpected.
 - (iii) pleasant and welcome.

(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"

It is as if they have the key to the prison as long as they

- (i) do not lose their language.
- (ii) are attached to their language.
- (iii) quickly learn the conqueror's language.

(c) Don't go so fast, you will get to your school in plenty of time.

You will get to your school

- (i) very late.
- (ii) too early.

(iii) early enough.

(d) I never saw him look so tall.

M. Hamel

(a) had grown physically taller

(b) seemed very confident

(c) stood on the chair

Answer:

(a) (ii) unexpected and quite startling.

(b) (ii) are attached to their language.

(c) (iii) early enough.

(d) (b) seemed very confident.

Noticing Form:

Read this sentence

M. Hamel had said that he would question us on participles. In the sentence above, the verb form “had said” in the first part is used to indicate an “earlier past”. The whole story is narrated in the past. M. Hamel’s “saying” happened earlier than the events in this story. This form of the verb is called the past perfect.

Pick out five sentences from the story with this form of the verb and say why this form has been used.

Answer:

Five sentences in the past perfect tense:

1. For the last two years, all our bad news had come from there- the lost battles, the draft, the orders of the commanding officer, I thought to myself. In this sentence, first the information had come and then Franz thought to himself.

2. I had counted on the commotion to get to my desk without being seen.

In this sentence, first he got scared and then he tried to get to the desk without being seen.

3. I had to open the door and go in before everybody.

In this sentence, he had to open the door before getting in.

4. When people are enslaved, as long as they hold fast to their language, it is as if they had key to their prison.

In this sentence, they had their key to prison before they were enslaved.

5. But he had the courage to hear every lesson to the very last.

This tense has been used because in the story, the incidents are happening at two different points of time. In this sentence, he had the courage and so, he listened to the lesson to the end.

Writing:

1. 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.

Answer:

NOTICE

ABC Public School

Essay Competition

On 05 – 09 – 2017, the school will host an essay competition. “The Qualities I Admire in My Favorite Teacher” is the topic. All interested students should contact the undersigned by September 2, 2017.

Secretary,

School Literary Club,

Your name



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