

**FLAMINGO: PROSE****MIND MAP****SUMMARY OF THE STORY**

“The Last Lesson” is the tender story of a young Alsatian boy and his last French lesson. The setting is an unnamed town in Alsace. The French districts of Alsace and Lorraine went into Prussian hands. The new Prussian rulers discontinued the teaching of French in the schools of these two districts. The French teachers were asked to leave. Now M. Hamel could no longer stay in his school.

One such student of M. Hamel, Franz who dreaded French class and M. Hamel’s iron ruler, came to the school that day thinking he would be punished as he had not learnt his lesson on participles. But on reaching school, he found Hamel dressed in his fine Sunday clothes and the old people of the village sitting quietly on the back benches. Franz was unable to figure anything out as everything about the day was unusual. He sat down there wondering what was going on when M. Hamel announced that today was the last French lesson that he was going to give as an order had come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. Even though Franz feared his master and had no idea about French participles, this news came as a shock to him. That was the first day when he realized that how important French was for him, but it was his last lesson in French.

When M. Hamel asked Franz to recite the rules of participles, he wanted to get it right but he was too nervous and mixed everything up. M. Hamel did not scold him for not being able to answer correctly. Instead he said that it is because the students have often postponed their learning till tomorrow. They always feel that there is time to learn. He further adds that Franz’s identity as a Frenchman did not have any weightage as he could neither speak nor write his own language. M. Hamel does not only blame the students for this situation. He feels that the parents are not very interested in their children’s education. Hamel goes on to describe the French language as the clearest and the most logical language in the world. He felt that people should always cling to their own language as he believes that when people are enslaved, it is through their language that they can find the key to their prison. He further said about the French language that it was the most beautiful, clearest and most logical language of the world. Finally with a very heavy heart, M. Hamel stood up; he was very sad as he walked to the blackboard, took a chalk and wrote on it “Vive La France” which means “Long Live France” and declared the class dismissed.

**1. THE LAST LESSON***by Alphonse Daudet***CHARACTER SKETCH: M. Hamel**

M. Hamel is an experienced teacher who has been teaching in school for forty years. He imparts primary education in all subjects. He is a hard task master and students like Franz, who are not good learners, are in great dread of being scolded by him. The latest order of the Prussian rulers upsets him. He has to leave the place for ever and feels heartbroken. He feels sad but exercises self-control. His performance during the last lesson is exemplary. He is kind even to a late comer like Franz. He uses a solemn and gentle tone while addressing the students. He has a logical mind and can analyze problems and deduce the reasons responsible for it. He knows the emotional hold of a language over its users. He is a good communicator and explains everything patiently. Partings are painful and being human, M. Hamel too is no exception. He fails to say goodbye as his throat is choked. On the whole, he is a patriotic gentleman.

**CHARACTER SKETCH: Franz**

Franz was a student in one of the schools in the districts of Alsace. His schoolmaster was M. Hamel and he was much scared of him. Franz enjoyed spending much of his time outside. He liked the warm and bright day and loved to listen to the chirping of the birds and to watch the drilling of the Prussian soldiers.

In addition to this, the boy had an acute sense of understanding, feeling, recognition and respect. At first, he did not show any interest in M. Hamel’s teaching. He didn’t even prepare his lesson on participles. However, Franz was forced to change his opinion about M. Hamel. When he got to know that M. Hamel would not be able to take any French lessons after the order from Berlin pronouncing that only German language would be taught in the schools of French districts of Alsace and Lorraine, he felt sad. He started respecting the man who had spent forty years in the same school.