

THE LAST LESSON

by
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Rising Action:

When he finally reached the school, he noticed a stark difference in the atmosphere of the class. To his surprise, M. Hamel asked very kindly to take his seat and announced that this was their last French Lesson as the Prussians announced that German would now be taught in French schools.

Climax:

Franz who never liked his books, didn't have interest in grammar and history, now suddenly developed a fascination for them. He even started liking M. Hamel. The idea that he would not teach them anymore, made Franz forget all about M. Hamel's strictness.

Falling Action:

M. Hamel showed his concern that people of Alsace had not given any importance to French. He declared his love for the French language and that it was the most beautiful language in the world. They must guard it among themselves and never forget it. It appeared that M. Hamel wanted to give them all he knew before going away.

Beginning:

Being late for school and scared of M. Hamel's reaction, Franz was rush towards school when he came across a huge crowd gathered around the bulletin board in the town hall.

Anticlimax:

As the church-clock struck twelve, the trumpet of the Prussian soldiers started playing loudly. M. Hamel stood up in his chair, trying to speak but something choked him. He turned to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk and wrote as large as he could: "Vive La France!" ("Long Live France!") and gestured that the school has been dismissed.

Background/ Setting:

The story, 'The Last Lesson' is set in the background of the Franco-Prussian war that was fought in 1870-1871 between Prussia and France. The Prussians captured the districts of Alsace and Lorraine in France. New orders were issued according to which German language was to be taught in place of French in these two districts.

Characters:

There are four characters:

- Franz: The narrator of the story, a young school boy in the French region of Alsace-Lorraine in the nineteenth century.
- M. Hamel: The school master of a small village school in the French region of Alsace-Lorraine.
- Old Hauser: An elderly villager.
- Prussian Soldiers: Forces occupying France's Alsace-Lorraine region.
- Minor Characters: other villagers

Themes:

- Criticism of Linguistic Chauvinism.
- Freedom of Language and Patriotism.
- The importance of education.
- The necessity to respect and learn one's own language.
- Universal human tendency to value things more when we no longer have access to them.
- Sense of loss and helplessness of the colonized.
- The attitude of teachers and students towards teaching and learning.