

**ANSWER KEY & MARKING SCHEME · CBSE CLASS 12**

# The Last Lesson

English Core · Chapter 1 · Use this with the Board Paper · Companion to Quick Drill

**HOW TO USE**

Attempt the Board Paper first (closed-book, full time). Then come here. For 2-mark+ questions, compare your answer to the model. For 3-4 mark questions, also consult the **Topper Templates** below — these show the exact step-by-step structure that scores full marks per CBSE marking-scheme conventions.

**MODEL ANSWERS · BOARD PAPER****Section A — Short-answer (3 marks × 4 = 12 marks)**

**Q1. Why was Franz reluctant to go to school the morning of the last lesson? Give at least three reasons. [3 marks]**

**Ans:** Full mark-by-mark model answer is in topper\_answer\_templates (see chapter notes). Marking scheme reward criteria: textual reference / formula application / final inference.

**Q2. What was the significance of the presence of the village elders in M. Hamel's classroom that morning? [3 marks]**

**Ans:** Full mark-by-mark model answer is in topper\_answer\_templates (see chapter notes). Marking scheme reward criteria: textual reference / formula application / final inference.

**Q3. Why did M. Hamel scold not just the children, but also the parents, and himself? [3 marks]**

**Ans:** Full mark-by-mark model answer is in topper\_answer\_templates (see chapter notes). Marking scheme reward criteria: textual reference / formula application / final inference.

**Q4. Describe Franz's transformation between the beginning and the end of the lesson. [3 marks]**

**Ans:** Full mark-by-mark model answer is in topper\_answer\_templates (see chapter notes). Marking scheme reward criteria: textual reference / formula application / final inference.

**Section B — Long-answer (6 marks × 2 = 12 marks)**

**Q5. How does Alphonse Daudet bring out the theme of linguistic chauvinism in 'The Last Lesson'? Justify your answer with textual references. [6 marks]**

**Ans:** Full mark-by-mark model answer is in topper\_answer\_templates (see chapter notes). Marking scheme reward criteria: textual reference / formula application / final inference.

**Q6. Discuss M. Hamel both as a teacher and as a patriot. Show how the two roles come together by the end of the lesson. [6 marks]**

**Ans:** Full mark-by-mark model answer is in topper\_answer\_templates (see chapter notes). Marking scheme reward criteria: textual reference / formula application / final inference.

**Section C — Extract-based (6 marks)**

**Q7. Read the extract: M. Hamel says — '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.' (a) Who says this and on what occasion? (1) (b) What does the speaker mean by 'the key to their prison'? (2) (c) How does this statement reflect the chapter's central theme? (3) [6 marks]**

**Ans:** Full mark-by-mark model answer is in topper\_answer\_templates (see chapter notes). Marking scheme reward criteria: textual reference / formula application / final inference.

★ TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark: 'How does Daudet bring out the theme of linguistic chauvinism in *The Last Lesson*'?*Annual*

<b>Step 1</b> [1 mark]	<b>Define linguistic chauvinism</b>	LINGUISTIC CHAUVINISM is the imposition of one community's language on another as an instrument of political dominance — the colonising community treating its own tongue as superior and demanding the colonised abandon theirs. In <i>The Last Lesson</i> , Alphonse Daudet stages this idea through the Prussian order replacing French with German in Alsace.
<b>Step 2</b> [1 mark]	<b>Anchor the historical premise</b>	The story is set in Alsace in 1870, immediately after the Franco-Prussian War. Under the Treaty of Frankfurt the region passed to Prussia. The new Prussian administration ordered that German alone be taught in Alsatian schools — extinguishing a generation's access to written French within a single school day. M. Hamel announces: 'an order has come from Berlin'.
<b>Step 3</b> [1.5 marks]	<b>Show theme through M. Hamel's words and actions</b>	M. Hamel calls French 'the most beautiful language in the world — the clearest, the most logical'. He tells the class that 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'. He writes the lesson 'France · Alsace · France · Alsace' across the blackboard sheets. At the end, unable to speak, he turns and writes 'Vive la France!' in his largest hand. Every gesture insists that language is identity, not just communication.
<b>Step 4</b> [1 mark]	<b>Show theme through the villagers + Franz</b>	The village elders — old Hauser with his battered primer, the former mayor, the postmaster — sit on the back benches to honour the language they will no longer be allowed to be taught in. Their silent presence makes the political violence visible. Franz, the narrator-child, undergoes the parallel realisation: the conjugations he resented now feel 'easy', and he is suddenly filled with regret. Through one child and one teacher Daudet enacts a whole community's loss.
<b>Step 5</b> [0.5 mark]	<b>Concluding evaluation</b>	Daudet's achievement is that linguistic chauvinism is shown rather than argued. He never lectures the reader; he stages an ordinary classroom on an extraordinary day, and the symbol of the closed school window, the order on the bulletin board, and the unfinished sentence on the blackboard do the work. The theme lands because it is felt, not preached.

**COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:**

- Treating 'linguistic chauvinism' as a synonym for racism or war (loses the definitional mark).
- Not citing M. Hamel's actual phrases ('most beautiful language', 'key to their prison', 'Vive la France').
- Ignoring the villagers' presence — examiners reward this detail because most students miss it.
- Generic plot summary in place of theme analysis.

## ★ TOPPER TEMPLATE — 3-mark: 'Why was Franz reluctant to go to school that day, and what changes his attitude by the end?'

*Annual*

<b>Step 1</b> [1 mark]	<b>Reluctance — concrete reasons</b>	Franz was reluctant because (a) he had not prepared his lesson on participles and feared M. Hamel's ruler; (b) the spring morning was warm — the birds chirped at the edge of the woods, the Prussian soldiers were drilling in the open field, and he was tempted to spend the day outdoors; (c) school felt like a chore, French like a tedious exercise.
<b>Step 2</b> [1 mark]	<b>The turning point in the schoolroom</b>	On arriving, Franz finds an unnatural quiet, the village elders on the back benches, M. Hamel in his green coat reserved for prize-days, and the announcement that this is the last French lesson — orders from Berlin. The familiar irritations are suddenly precious, about to be taken away.
<b>Step 3</b> [1 mark]	<b>The transformation by end</b>	By the close of the lesson Franz finds, to his astonishment, that he can 'understand it all' — the rules of grammar he had dreaded are 'easy, easy'. He is filled with regret for the time he wasted, gratitude for M. Hamel, and a child's bewildered grief at the closing of the school. The story's emotional arc is precisely this turn — from reluctance to reverence in a single morning.

**COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:**

- Listing only one reason for reluctance instead of two-three concrete causes (laziness alone is incomplete).
- Missing the Prussian-soldier detail — it foreshadows the central conflict.
- Stopping at reluctance without describing the transformation (the question asks for both halves).

★ **TOPPER TEMPLATE — 5-mark: 'Discuss M. Hamel as a teacher and as a patriot.'**

Annual

<b>Step 1</b> [1.5 marks]	<b>M. Hamel as a teacher — opening characterisation</b>	At first sight, M. Hamel is the strict village schoolmaster — ruler in hand, ready to reprimand a late student. The narrator's child-eye view emphasises his sternness. But the story slowly inverts this picture. M. Hamel has taught in the same school for forty years; he has watched the same sycamore tree grow in the yard; he has known the parents and grandparents of his pupils. His teaching is not a job, it is a vocation.
<b>Step 2</b> [1.5 marks]	<b>Pedagogical depth on the final day</b>	On the day of the last lesson he does not retreat into self-pity. He prepares fresh copybooks with 'France · Alsace' written in beautiful round hand. He teaches grammar with new clarity — 'I never saw him explain everything with so much patience' — and Franz, who had dreaded the participle, now understands. He is teaching against time, knowing every minute is the last he will spend at this desk.
<b>Step 3</b> [1.5 marks]	<b>M. Hamel as patriot</b>	His patriotism is not the loud, banner-waving kind. It is the quiet conviction that LANGUAGE IS COUNTRY. He scolds the parents — and himself — for not having made the children learn French sooner. He calls French 'the most beautiful, the clearest, the most logical language' and tells the class that as long as a conquered people 'hold fast to their language, it is as if they had the key to their prison'. The blackboard sheets reading 'France · Alsace' make pedagogy and patriotism inseparable.
<b>Step 4</b> [0.5 mark]	<b>The closing image</b>	At the stroke of the church-clock noon, M. Hamel tries to speak and cannot. He turns to the blackboard, takes up a piece of chalk and writes, in the largest hand he can, 'VIVE LA FRANCE!' — then lets his head rest against the wall and dismisses the class with a gesture. He has given the last French lesson; he has nothing left to teach but love of country.

**COMMON LOSS OF MARKS:**

- Failing to show the TWO sides — teacher and patriot — separately, then synthesising them. Both halves carry marks.
- No textual quotation. 'Key to their prison' and 'Vive la France!' must appear.
- Treating his early sternness as the whole picture (i.e., missing the arc).

**MARKING SCHEME — GENERAL NOTES**

- Cite Alphonse Daudet + Alsace + 1870 + Treaty of Frankfurt for setting questions — specific facts carry marks.
- Quote at least one of: 'most beautiful language', 'key to their prison', 'Vive la France!' on every theme answer.
- Mention old Hauser's primer + village elders' presence on character / theme questions — examiners reward this.
- 5-mark theme questions: define + anchor in history + cite 2-3 textual references + state Daudet's restraint as conclusion.
- Penalise plot summary without theme analysis on theme questions.