

UNIT 2

The Last Lesson

Alphonse Daudet



Learning Outcomes:

By the end of this unit, the students will be able to:

- Demonstrate attentive listening skills in a class setting and taking turns to speak with standard pronunciation and intonation.
- Evaluate how authors use language, including figurative language, considering the impact on the reader. Discuss others' reading critically, taking account of their views. Express informed opinions, justify the viewpoint and make recommendations and develop an interest in a variety of texts.
- Analyse how an author's choices concerning how to structure specific parts of a text (e.g., the choice of where to begin or end a story, the choice to provide a comic or tragic resolution) contribute to its overall structure and meaning as well as its aesthetic impact.
- Identify and use adjectival, prepositional, and adverbial phrases in reading and writing tasks.
- Apply editing and proofreading skills to a wide range of texts and contexts.
- Apply the techniques of writing the first draft with sufficient details, proofreading and editing to suit the purpose and audience.



Pre-reading:

- Why is the mother tongue considered a vital part of a person's cultural identity?
- How does losing one's mother tongue affect an individual and a community's sense of belonging and pride?

1. I started for school very late that morning and was in great dread of a **scolding**, especially because M. Hamel had said that he would question us on participles, and I did not know the first word about them. For a moment I thought of running away and spending the day out of doors. It was so warm, so bright! The birds were chirping at the **edge** of the woods; and in the open field back of the saw-mill the Prussian soldiers were drilling. It was all much more tempting than the rule for participles, but I had the strength to resist, and hurried off to school.
2. When I passed the town hall there was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board. For the last two years all our bad news had come from there – the lost battles, the draft, the orders of the commanding officer – and I thought to myself,

without stopping:

"What can be the matter now?"

3. Then, as I hurried by as fast as I could go, the blacksmith, Wachter, who was there, with his **apprentice**, reading the bulletin, called after me:

"Don't go so fast, bub; you'll get to your school in plenty of time!"

4. I thought he was making fun of me, and reached M. Hamel's little garden all out of breath.

5. Usually, when school began, there was a great bustle, which could be heard out in the street, the opening and closing of desks, lessons repeated in unison, very loud, with our hands over our ears to understand better, and the teacher's great ruler rapping on the table. But now it was all so still! I had counted on the commotion to get to my desk without being seen; but, of course, that day everything had to be as quiet as Sunday morning. Through the window I saw my classmates, already in their places, and M. Hamel walking up and down with his terrible iron ruler under his arm. I had to open the door and go in before everybody. You can imagine how I **blushed** and how frightened I was.



While-reading

Why was the school unusually quiet when the narrator arrived late?

6. But nothing happened, M. Hamel saw me and said very kindly:
"Go to your place quickly, little Franz. We were beginning without you."

7. I jumped over the bench and sat down at my desk. Not till then, when I had got a little over my fright, did I see that our teacher had on his beautiful green coat, his frilled shirt, and the little black silk cap, all **embroidered**, that he never wore except on inspection and prize days. Besides, the whole school seemed so strange and solemn. But the thing that surprised me most was to see, on the back benches that were always empty, the village people sitting quietly like ourselves; old Hauser, with his three-cornered hat, the former mayor, the former postmaster, and several others besides. Everybody looked sad; and Hauser had brought an old primer, thumbed at the edges, and he held it open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.

8. While I was wondering about it all, M. Hamel mounted his chair, and, in the same grave and **gentle** tone which he had used to me, said:

"My children, this is the last lesson I shall give you. The order has come from Berlin to teach only German in the schools of Alsace and Lorraine. The new master comes tomorrow. This is your last French lesson. I want you to be very attentive."

9. What a thunder-clap these words were to me!

10. Oh, the wretches; that was what they had put up at the town-hall!

11. My last French lesson! Why, I hardly knew how to write! I should never learn any more! I must stop there, then! Oh, how sorry I was for not learning my lessons, for seeking birds' eggs, or going sliding on the Saar! My books, that had seemed such a **nuisance** a while ago, so heavy to carry, my grammar, and my history of the saints, were old friends now that I couldn't give up. And M. Hamel, too; the idea that he was going away, that I should never see him again, made me forget all about his ruler and how cranky he was.
12. Poor man! It was in honor of this last lesson that he had put on his fine Sunday-clothes, and now I understood why the old men of the village were sitting there in the back of the room. It was because they were sorry, too, that they had not gone to school more. It was their way of thanking our master for his forty years of faithful service and of showing their respect for the country that was theirs no more.
13. While I was thinking of all this, I heard my name called. It was my turn to recite. What would I not have given to be able to say that **dreadful** rule for the participle all through, very loud and clear, and without one mistake? But I got mixed up on the first words and stood there, holding on to my desk, my heart beating, and not daring to look up. I heard M. Hamel say to me:
"I won't scold you, little Franz; you must feel bad enough. See how it is! Every day we have said to ourselves: 'Bah! I've plenty of time. I'll learn it tomorrow.' And now you see where we've come out. Ah, that's the great trouble with Alsace; she puts off learning till tomorrow. Now those fellows out there will have the right to say to you: 'How is it; you pretend to be Frenchmen, and yet you can neither speak nor write your own language?' But you are not the worst, poor little Franz. We've all a great deal to reproach ourselves with."
14. "Your parents were not **anxious** enough to have you learn. They preferred to put you to work on a farm or at the mills, so as to have a little more money. And I? I've been to blame also. Have I not often sent you to water my flowers instead of learning your lessons? And when I wanted to go fishing, did I not just give you a holiday?"
15. Then, from one thing to another, M. Hamel went on to talk of the French language, saying that it was the most beautiful language in the world – the clearest, the most **logical**; that we must guard it among us and never forget it, because 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. Then he opened a grammar and read us our lesson. I was amazed to see how well

**While-reading**

Why did the narrator feel sorry during his last French lesson?

**While-reading**

What did M. Hamel say about the importance of the French language?



I understood it. All he said seemed so easy, so easy! I think, too, that I had never listened so carefully, and that he had never explained everything with so much patience. It seemed almost as if the poor man wanted to give us all he knew before going away, and to put it all into our heads at one stroke.

16. After the grammar, we had a lesson in writing. That day M. Hamel had new copies for us, written in a beautiful round hand: France, Alsace, France, Alsace. They looked like little flags **floating** everywhere in the school-room, hung from the rod at the top of our desks. You ought to have seen how everyone set to work, and how quiet it was! The only sound was the scratching of the pens over the paper. Once some beetles flew in; but nobody paid any attention to them, not even the littlest ones, who worked right on tracing their fish-hooks, as if that was French, too. On the roof the pigeons cooed very low, and I thought to myself:

"Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?"

17. Whenever I looked up from my writing, I saw M. Hamel sitting **motionless** in his chair and gazing first at one thing, then at another, as if he wanted to fix in his mind just how everything looked in that little school-room. Fancy! For forty years he had been there in the same place, with his garden outside the window and his class in front of him, just like that. Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth; the walnut-trees in the garden were taller, and the hop-vine, that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof. How it must have broken his heart to leave it all, poor man; to hear his sister moving about in the room above, packing their trunks! For they must leave the country next day.
18. But he had the courage to hear every lesson to the very last. After the writing, we had a lesson in history, and then the babies chanted their ba, be, bi, bo, bu. Down there at the back of the room old Hauser had put on his spectacles and, holding his primer in both hands, spelled the letters with them. You could see that he, too, was crying; his voice **trembled** with **emotion**, and it was so funny to hear him that we all wanted to laugh and cry. Ah, how well I remember it, that last lesson!
19. All at once the church-clock struck twelve. Then the Angelus. At the same moment the trumpets of the Prussians, returning from drill, sounded under our windows. M. Hamel stood up, very pale, in his chair. I never saw him look so tall.
20. "My friends," said he, "I--I--" But something choked him. He could not go on.
21. Then he turned to the blackboard, took a piece of chalk, and, bearing on with all his might, he wrote as large as he could:

"Vive La France!"

22. Then he stopped and leaned his head against the wall, and, without a word, he made a **gesture** to us with his hand; "School is dismissed--you may go."

Theme

The theme of "*The Last Lesson*" by Alphonse Daudet centers on the importance of language as a symbol of identity, culture, and national pride. The story reflects how people often take their language, education, and freedom for granted until they are faced with the threat of losing them. When the French language is ordered to be replaced by German in Alsace, the villagers and students realize the deep value of their mother tongue. M. Hamel's final lesson becomes a moving tribute to the French language and a moment of collective regret for neglecting it. Through Franz's eyes, we see how language binds people to their history and heritage. The story urges us to appreciate and preserve our cultural roots before they are taken away.

About the author

Alphonse Daudet was a French novelist and short story writer known for his vivid portrayals of rural life and his deep patriotism. Born in 1840 in Nîmes, France, he began his career as a schoolteacher before turning to journalism and literature. His works often reflect the struggles of ordinary people and the impact of historical events on their lives. *The Last Lesson* is one such story that captures the pain of losing one's language and identity. Daudet wrote with simplicity, emotion, and a strong sense of place and time. He remains a respected figure in French literature for his heartfelt storytelling and national spirit.



Glossary

Words	Meanings
anxious	worried or nervous about something
apprentice	a person learning a trade or skill from someone experienced
blushed	turned red in the face because of embarrassment or shyness
dreadful	very bad, terrible, or causing fear
edge	the outer or farthest point of something
embroidered	decorated with patterns sewn using thread
emotion	a strong feeling like happiness, sadness, anger, or fear
floating	staying or moving on the surface of water
gentle	kind, soft, or not harsh
gesture	a movement of the hand or body to express an idea or feeling
logical	reasonable; making sense; based on facts; rational
motionless	still; not moving
nuisance	something or someone that is annoying or causes trouble
scolding	speaking angrily to someone because they did something wrong
trembled	shook slightly, often from fear, cold, or weakness



Reading and Critical Thinking

A. Answer the following questions:

1. Why was Franz afraid of going to school that morning?
2. What tempted Franz to skip school and spend the day outside?
3. What unusual things did Franz notice when he reached the school?
4. Why were the village people sitting at the back of the classroom?
5. What news had come from the bulletin-board near the town hall?
6. What did M. Hamel say about the French language?
7. How did Franz's feelings about school, books, and M. Hamel change during the lesson?
8. What emotions did the people in the classroom feel during the last lesson? Give two examples.
9. Why did M. Hamel wear his special clothes that day?
10. What was the significance of the phrase "Vive La France" written on the blackboard?

B. Choose the correct option.

1. Who is the narrator of the story?
a) Hamel b) Franz c) Hauser d) Wachter
2. What subject was Franz dreading to be questioned on?
a) history b) grammar c) participles d) vocabulary
3. French was being replaced with _____ in schools?
a) German b) Spanish c) Latin d) English
4. What did the bulletin-board usually bring?
a) weather b) good news c) bad news d) holidays
5. Who wore a three-cornered hat?
a) Franz b) M. Hamel c) Hauser d) Wachter
6. What did the villagers come to the school for?
a) to protest b) to say goodbye
c) to show respect d) to learn German
7. What did M. Hamel wear for the last lesson?
a) uniform b) suit c) casuals d) Sunday-clothes
8. Which language was being taught in Alsace and Lorraine?
a) English b) Spanish c) French d) Prussian
9. What did M. Hamel write on the blackboard?
a) France Forever b) Long Live France
c) Vive La France d) Goodbye France

10. What time did the church-clock strike at the end?

- a) eleven b) twelve c) one d) ten

C. Write a short paragraph expressing your opinion about the author's language choices.

Narrative Structure Analysis: An author's structural choices refer to how a text is organized, including where it begins and ends, how events are sequenced, and whether it ends on a tragic, hopeful, or comic note. These choices shape the reader's experience, highlight key themes, and add emotional or aesthetic impact.

Examples:

1. Beginning a story in the middle of action:

- **Example:** In *The Odyssey*, Homer begins the story in the middle of Odysseus's journey, which builds tension and curiosity.
- **Effect:** It captures attention quickly and reveals the backstory through flashbacks, maintaining suspense.

2. Ending a story tragically instead of happily:

- **Example:** In Shakespeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, the story ends in the death of the hero and heroine.
- **Effect:** It highlights the theme of fate and the consequences of family conflict. The tragic ending leaves a lasting emotional impact.

3. Circular structure:

- **Example:** In *Of Mice and Men* by John Steinbeck, the story ends in the same setting as the beginning.
- **Effect:** Emphasizes the cycle of dreams and hopelessness, enhancing the theme of isolation.

Read the story carefully, analyse its structure and answer the following questions:

1. How does the author begin the story? Why?
2. How does the ending affect your feelings about the characters?
3. What is the message emphasized by this structure?



Vocabulary and Grammar

Adjectival Phrase: A group of words that describes a noun or pronoun, usually answering the question "What kind?" or "Which one?"

Example: *The boy with the red cap is my brother.* "**with the red cap**" describes *boy*.



For the Teacher:

- Bring the students' attention to how the author introduces characters, builds conflict, and resolves the story.
- Introduce the setting, characters, and problem at the beginning of the story.

Prepositional Phrase: A phrase that begins with a preposition and shows direction, place, time, or relationship.

Example: *She sat on the wooden bench.* "**on the wooden bench**" tells where she sat.

Adverbial Phrase: A group of words that acts like an adverb, modifying a verb, adjective, or another adverb. It often answers **how, when, where, or why**.

Example: *He ran with great speed.* "**with great speed**" tells how he ran.

Read this Paragraph:

The boy with the broken bicycle stood silently by the roadside. His jacket, covered in dust, flapped gently in the wind. After a long day at school, he was too tired to speak. A kind man in a blue uniform approached him with a warm smile. The boy looked at the stranger with cautious eyes. Without saying a word, the man knelt beside the bent wheel. He worked with great care, adjusting the chain and fixing the brake. The boy watched with growing hope. In just a few minutes, the bicycle was ready again. Smiling, the boy thanked the man and rode away into the fading light.

A. Identify adjectival phrase, prepositional phrase, and adverbial phrase from the paragraph.



Oral Communication Skills

Active listening means focusing fully on the speaker, understanding their message without interrupting, and responding thoughtfully. It also involves speaking clearly in return, using correct pronunciation and natural intonation.

Example: During a classroom discussion, when a classmate shares an idea about a story, others listen without interrupting, and the next speaker responds by saying, "I agree with Sara because ..." using clear pronunciation and tone.

A. Now, the teacher will read a short paragraph from a story. Students will listen attentively without writing. After listening, the teacher will ask a few comprehension questions. Then, students will take turns summarizing the story or adding their thoughts using proper pronunciation and tone.



Writing Skills

Editing: Editing is the process of improving the content, clarity, organization, and style of a text. It focuses on how ideas are presented and may involve rewriting or rearranging parts of the text.

Example:

Original: *I enjoy read books on weekend.*

Edited: *I enjoy reading books on the weekend.*

Proofreading: Proofreading is the process of checking a text for spelling, punctuation, grammar, and formatting errors after editing is complete.

Example:

Edited: *She their dog walked in the park.*

Proofread: *She walked her dog in the park.*

Paragraph for Editing and Proofreading: Intelligence is not only about getting good marks in school. It include how well a person solve problems, understand other peoples feelings, and make smart decisions. Some people is good at math while other are better at drawing or music. Their are many kinds of intelligence like logical, emotional and creative. For example, a scientist who discover new medicine and a musician who compose beautiful songs both show diffrent types of being smart. Sometimes, students who don't do well in test are actualy very intelligent in other ways. Teachers should noticed and support all kind of talents. Reading books and asking questions help improve our thinking skill. Kids should be encourag to explore new ideas without fear of making mistakes. Being curious is more important then knowing all the answers. Even adults keeps learning throughout their lifes. Intelligence grows when we use our mind in a active and positive way.

B. Find and correct errors in spelling, grammar, punctuation, or word usage.

After editing and proofreading, write the paragraph and compare it with the following corrected version.

Corrected Paragraph: Intelligence is not only about getting good marks in school. It includes how well a person solves problems, understands other people's feelings, and makes smart decisions. Some people are good at math, while others are better at drawing or music. There are many kinds of intelligence, like logical, emotional, and creative. For example, a scientist who discovers new medicine and a musician who composes beautiful songs both show different types of being smart. Sometimes, students who don't do well on tests are actually very intelligent in other ways. Teachers should notice and support all kinds of talents. Reading books and asking questions help improve our thinking skills. Kids should be encouraged to explore new ideas without fear of making mistakes. Being curious is more important than knowing all the answers. Even adults keep learning throughout their lives. Intelligence grows when we use our minds in an active and positive way.

For the Teacher:



- Ask the students to read their writing slowly to catch spelling, grammar, or punctuation mistakes.