

Flamingo

Chapter 1. THE LAST LESSON

Day1 EXPLANATION

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.

Explanation

The narrator of the story is a young school going boy named Franz. That morning, he was scared as he was late for school. Also, as their teacher M. Hamel had announced the previous day that he would test them on the topic of 'Participles' and Franz did not know anything at all, he was more scared of being scolded.

2. 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 sawmill the Prussian soldiers were drilling.

Explanation

Franz had another option in his mind – to miss school and enjoy the day out in the warm and bright weather. He describes the scene – there were birds chirping on the trees and the noise of the Prussian soldiers doing the drill behind the sawmill could also be heard.

3. It was all much more tempting than the rule for participles, but I had the strength to resist, and hurried off to school.

Explanation

The scene outside was more attractive than the school but Franz controlled the temptation and chose to attend school.

4. 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?"

Explanation

As Franz walked past the town hall, he noticed a huge crowd at the notice board. The war with Prussia had begun two and a half years ago and since then all the bad news like losing the war, occupation of Alsace and Lorraine by the enemy i.e. Prussia, etc had been communicated to the people through this bulletin board. Franz kept on walking towards the school and thought in his mind that what news could have been put up at the board now.

5. 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!"
I thought he was making fun of me, and reached M. Hamel's little garden all out of breath.

Explanation

As he walked hurriedly towards the school, the blacksmith who was also reading the news and had come along with his trainee called out to Franz from behind and said that he needn't go in such a hurry as there was plenty of time for him to reach school.

Franz thought that the blacksmith was making fun of him as he was already late for school. When Franz reached the garden outside the school, he was out of breath as he had walked very fast.

6. 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.

Explanation

Franz describes the usual scene at the school in the mornings – a lot of noise created by the moving of desks, children repeating their lessons and teachers striking the tables with the rulers could be heard.

7. 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.

Explanation

That day was unusual as there was no such sound coming out of the school and it seemed that the school was closed as it used to be on a Sunday morning. Franz had planned that he would take cover under the commotion and reach the class without being noticed but that did not seem possible.

8. 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.

Explanation

Franz peeped inside his class and saw his classmates seated and M. Hamel, their teacher walking in the class with the ruler made of iron placed under his arm. Franz feared a beating.

9. I had to open the door and go in before everybody. You can imagine how I blushed and how frightened I was.

Explanation

Franz was ashamed of being late and feared a scolding as he had to enter the classroom in front of everyone.

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

Explanation

Franz found it strange as M. Hamel did not say anything and on the contrary, politely asked him to get to his seat, as the class was about to begin without him.