

The Last Lesson - Alphonso Daudet

Term	Explanation
in great dread of	Feeling intense fear or anxiety about something expected. Franz fears being scolded because he is late and unprepared. Example: 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.
dread	Strong fear of something that may happen. Here it reflects Franz's anxiety about facing his teacher. Example: 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.
scolding	An angry or disapproving reprimand. Franz expects punishment for arriving late and not knowing his lesson. Example: 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.
participles	Verb forms used in forming tenses or functioning as adjectives. They are the grammar topic on which Franz is supposed to be prepared. Example: 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.
did not know the first word about	Knew nothing at all about a subject. The expression emphasises Franz's complete lack of preparation. Example: 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.
out of doors	Outside, in the open air. Franz is tempted to spend the day outdoors rather than attend school. Example: For a moment I thought of running away and spending the day out of doors.
chirping	Making short, light bird sounds. The pleasant sound adds to the attraction of the world outside school. Example: The birds were chirping at the edge of the woods; and in the open field back of the sawmill the Prussian soldiers were drilling.
sawmill	A place where logs are cut into boards or other pieces of timber. It helps locate the field where the soldiers are practising. Example: The birds were chirping at the edge of the woods; and in the open field back of the sawmill the Prussian soldiers were drilling.
drilling	Practising organised military movements or exercises. The soldiers' presence brings the occupation into Franz's everyday surroundings. Example: The birds were chirping at the edge of the woods; and in the open field back of the sawmill the Prussian soldiers were drilling.
tempting	Attractive enough to make someone want to do or have something. The outdoor scene seems more appealing to Franz than grammar. Example: It was all much more tempting than the rule for participles, but I had the strength to resist, and hurried off to school.
resist	Refuse to give in to an attraction or urge. Franz overcomes the temptation to miss school. Example: It was all much more tempting than the rule for participles, but I had the strength to resist, and hurried off to school.
bulletin-board	A board on which public notices and announcements are displayed. In the story, it has become associated with unwelcome official news. Example: When I passed the town hall there was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board.
the draft	Compulsory selection or recruitment for military service. It is among the troubling announcements posted at the town hall. Example: 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?"
commanding	The military officer in charge of a unit or force. His orders show the

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| officer                    | army's authority over local life. <b>Example:</b> 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?”                                                                                                                                                |
| blacksmith                 | A craftsperson who shapes and works iron, often by heating and hammering it. Wachter is identified by this occupation. <b>Example:</b> 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!”                                               |
| apprentice                 | A person learning a skilled trade by working with an experienced worker. The young trainee is with Wachter at the notice board. <b>Example:</b> 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!”                                      |
| bulletin                   | A short official notice or announcement. Here it contains news that the townspeople are reading. <b>Example:</b> When I passed the town hall there was a crowd in front of the bulletin-board.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| in plenty of time          | Early enough, with no need to hurry. Wachter’s remark has a significance Franz does not yet understand. <b>Example:</b> 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!”                                                              |
| making fun of me           | Mocking or teasing me. Franz mistakenly assumes that Wachter is joking about his lateness. <b>Example:</b> I thought he was making fun of me, and reached M. Hamel’s little garden all out of breath.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| out of breath              | Breathing rapidly or with difficulty after exertion. Franz has hurried to school in fear of being late. <b>Example:</b> I thought he was making fun of me, and reached M. Hamel’s little garden all out of breath.                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| a great bustle             | A lively mixture of noise, movement and activity. It describes the usual beginning of the school day. <b>Example:</b> 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.         |
| bustle                     | Busy, noisy activity. Its absence helps create the unusual atmosphere of the last lesson. <b>Example:</b> 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.                     |
| in unison                  | Together, at the same time and in the same manner. The pupils normally repeat their lessons aloud as a group. <b>Example:</b> 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. |
| rapping                    | Striking a surface with quick, sharp taps. The teacher’s ruler normally contributes to the classroom noise. <b>Example:</b> 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.   |
| counted on                 | Relied on or expected something to happen. Franz hopes the usual noise will conceal his late arrival. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                        |
| commotion                  | Noisy confusion or disturbance. Franz expects it to provide a chance to reach his desk unnoticed. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                            |
| as quiet as Sunday morning | Exceptionally calm and silent, like the stillness associated with a Sunday morning. The comparison highlights the contrast with the school’s usual bustle. <b>Example:</b> 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                                                                                                      |

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|                       | as Sunday morning.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| blushed               | Became red in the face because of embarrassment or another strong emotion. Franz feels exposed when he enters before everyone. <b>Example:</b> You can imagine how I blushed and how frightened I was.                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| frilled shirt         | A shirt decorated with gathered or pleated strips of fabric. It forms part of the teacher's special formal clothing. <b>Example:</b> 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.           |
| embroidered           | Decorated with designs stitched in thread. The ornamented cap marks the occasion as unusually important. <b>Example:</b> 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.                       |
| inspection            | An official examination or visit to check standards. The teacher normally reserves his fine clothes for such formal occasions. <b>Example:</b> 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. |
| solemn                | Serious, quiet and dignified. It describes the school's mood as everyone confronts the loss of French lessons. <b>Example:</b> Besides, the whole school seemed so strange and solemn.                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| primer                | An elementary book used to teach reading. Hauser's old book shows his wish to join the children in learning. <b>Example:</b> Everybody looked sad; and Hauser had brought an old primer, thumbbed at the edges, and he held it open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.                                                                                           |
| thumbbed at the edges | Worn around the edges through repeated handling and turning of pages. The phrase reveals the age and use of Hauser's primer. <b>Example:</b> Everybody looked sad; and Hauser had brought an old primer, thumbbed at the edges, and he held it open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.                                                                           |
| spectacles            | Glasses worn to improve sight. Hauser places them across the pages of his book. <b>Example:</b> Everybody looked sad; and Hauser had brought an old primer, thumbbed at the edges, and he held it open on his knees with his great spectacles lying across the pages.                                                                                                                        |
| mounted               | Climbed up onto something. Here M. Hamel takes his position to address the class. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                              |
| grave and gentle tone | A manner of speaking that is serious but kind. It conveys both the importance of the announcement and the teacher's affection for his pupils. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                  |
| grave                 | Serious and solemn. Here it describes the teacher's voice as he announces the last lesson. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                     |
| attentive             | Listening or observing with care and concentration. M. Hamel asks the class to make the most of the final French lesson. <b>Example:</b> I want you to be very attentive."                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| a thunderclap         | A sudden, overwhelming shock. The metaphor conveys the force with which the announcement strikes Franz. <b>Example:</b> What a thunderclap these words were to me!                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| wretches              | People regarded with anger, contempt or pity because of their conduct or condition. Here Franz uses the word angrily for those responsible for the order. <b>Example:</b> Oh, the wretches; that was what they had put up at the town-hall!                                                                                                                                                  |
| nuisance              | Something troublesome or irritating. Franz had previously regarded his heavy schoolbooks as a burden. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                      |

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| old friends                 | Familiar companions valued with affection. Franz personifies his books in this way when he realises he may lose the opportunity to study them. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| cranky                      | Irritable or easily annoyed. Franz's memory of the teacher's temper loses importance beside the thought of his departure. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| in honour of                | As a sign of respect for a person or occasion. M. Hamel dresses formally to mark the importance of his final lesson. <b>Example:</b> It was in honour 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| faithful service            | Loyal and dependable work carried out over time. The villagers acknowledge the teacher's forty years of commitment. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| recite                      | Repeat aloud something learned, often from memory. Franz is asked to say the grammar rule before the class. <b>Example:</b> It was my turn to recite.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| dreadful                    | Causing fear, anxiety or distress. To Franz, the grammar rule seems frightening because he cannot repeat it correctly. <b>Example:</b> 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?                                                                                                                                                                                                                                              |
| got mixed up                | Became confused and unable to keep things in the correct order. Franz falters as soon as he begins answering. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                           |
| puts off                    | Postpones something until a later time. M. Hamel criticises the habit of delaying learning. <b>Example:</b> Ah, that's the great trouble with Alsace; she puts off learning till tomorrow.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                         |
| reproach ourselves with     | Blame or criticise ourselves for something wrong or neglected. The teacher recognises that pupils, parents and he himself share responsibility. <b>Example:</b> We've all a great deal to reproach ourselves with."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| reproach                    | Express blame or disapproval. Here it refers to honestly acknowledging one's own failures. <b>Example:</b> We've all a great deal to reproach ourselves with."                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| anxious enough              | Sufficiently eager or concerned about something. M. Hamel means that the parents did not give their children's education enough importance. <b>Example:</b> "Your parents were not anxious enough to have you learn.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                               |
| logical                     | Clear, orderly and based on reason. M. Hamel uses the word while expressing his admiration for French. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                           |
| enslaved                    | Deprived of freedom and placed under another's control. Here it refers to a people subjected to foreign domination. <b>Example:</b> 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.                              |
| hold fast to their language | Remain firmly attached to their language and continue preserving and using it. M. Hamel presents this loyalty as essential to cultural identity. <b>Example:</b> 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. |
| hold fast to                | Keep a firm attachment to something and refuse to abandon it. Here it expresses steadfast loyalty to one's language. <b>Example:</b> Then, from one                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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|                                  | 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.                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| the key to their prison          | A means of preserving hope and eventually recovering freedom. The metaphor suggests that language can sustain the identity of an oppressed people. <b>Example:</b> 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. |
| patience                         | The ability to continue calmly without becoming irritated. Franz notices the care with which the teacher explains the final lesson. <b>Example:</b> I think, too, that I had never listened so carefully, and that he had never explained everything with so much patience.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                          |
| at one stroke                    | All at once or through a single action. The expression conveys the teacher's urgent desire to pass on everything he knows. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                      |
| copies                           | Models of handwriting supplied for pupils to reproduce. Here they display the names France and Alsace. <b>Example:</b> That day M. Hamel had new copies for us, written in a beautiful round hand — France, Alsace, France, Alsace.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                  |
| round hand                       | A style of handwriting with rounded, clearly formed letters. It describes the attractive models prepared by M. Hamel. <b>Example:</b> That day M. Hamel had new copies for us, written in a beautiful round hand — France, Alsace, France, Alsace.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                   |
| little flags floating everywhere | An image comparing the displayed writing models to small waving flags. It connects the writing lesson with patriotic feeling. <b>Example:</b> They looked like little flags floating everywhere in the school-room, hung from the rod at the top of our desks.                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| set to work                      | Began working with purpose and concentration. The pupils now apply themselves seriously to the lesson. <b>Example:</b> You ought to have seen how every one set to work, and how quiet it was!                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                       |
| tracing their fish-hooks         | Practising simple curved pen-strokes resembling hooks. The phrase describes the youngest pupils' early handwriting exercises. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| cooed                            | Made the soft, low sound characteristic of pigeons. Their sound prompts Franz's thought about the limits of the imposed language order. <b>Example:</b> On the roof the pigeons cooed very low, and I thought to myself, "Will they make them sing in German, even the pigeons?"                                                                                                                                                                                                                                                     |
| motionless                       | Completely still. The teacher sits quietly while looking around the familiar classroom. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                                                                |
| gazing                           | Looking steadily and intently at something. M. Hamel seems to be trying to remember every detail of the room. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                                          |
| fix in his mind                  | Impress something firmly on his memory. The teacher wants to preserve the appearance of the classroom before leaving it. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                                                                                                               |
| worn smooth                      | Made smooth through long use and repeated contact. The furniture bears evidence of the many years spent in the school. <b>Example:</b> Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth; the walnut-trees in the garden were taller, and the hopvine that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof.                                                                                                                                                                                                                |

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| hopvine                       | A climbing plant that produces hops. Its growth around the windows emphasises how long the teacher has lived and worked there. <b>Example:</b> Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth; the walnut-trees in the garden were taller, and the hopvine that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof. |
| twined                        | Wound or curled around something. The plant has grown around the windows towards the roof. <b>Example:</b> Only the desks and benches had been worn smooth; the walnut-trees in the garden were taller, and the hopvine that he had planted himself twined about the windows to the roof.                                     |
| broken his heart              | Caused him deep emotional pain. The expression conveys the sorrow of leaving a place central to his life. <b>Example:</b> 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!                                                               |
| trunks                        | Large, strong boxes used for storing and transporting belongings. Their packing signals the teacher's approaching departure. <b>Example:</b> 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!                                            |
| chanted                       | Repeated words or sounds rhythmically together. The youngest pupils practise their elementary sounds aloud. <b>Example:</b> After the writing, we had a lesson in history, and then the babies chanted their ba, be bi, bo, bu.                                                                                               |
| trembled with emotion         | Shook because of strong feeling. Hauser's unsteady voice reveals his grief and regret. <b>Example:</b> 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.                                                                          |
| Angelus                       | A Roman Catholic prayer traditionally marked by the ringing of a bell at set times, including noon. In the scene, the bell helps signal the end of the lesson. <b>Example:</b> Then the Angelus.                                                                                                                              |
| pale                          | Having little colour in the face. M. Hamel's appearance reflects the strain of the final moment. <b>Example:</b> M. Hamel stood up, very pale, in his chair.                                                                                                                                                                  |
| choked him                    | Prevented him from speaking because of overwhelming emotion. The teacher cannot complete his farewell aloud. <b>Example:</b> "My friends," said he, "I—I—" But something choked him.                                                                                                                                          |
| bearing on with all his might | Pressing down with all his strength. His forceful writing expresses the intensity of feelings he can no longer put into speech. <b>Example:</b> 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!"                                |
| with all his might            | Using all his strength or effort. It emphasises the physical and emotional force behind his final written words. <b>Example:</b> 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!"                                               |
| Vive La France                | A French expression meaning Long live France. The teacher writes it as a final declaration of love and loyalty to his country. <b>Example:</b> 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!"                                 |
| gesture                       | A movement of the hand or body that communicates meaning. Unable to speak, the teacher indicates that the pupils may leave. <b>Example:</b> 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."                            |
| dismissed                     | Allowed or instructed to leave at the end of a gathering or lesson. Here it marks the final end of the French class. <b>Example:</b> 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."                                   |

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