

M Dufarge enters the classroom. All the ladies stand and greet him in a variety of French accents

ALL STUDENTS: Bonjour Monsieur Dufarge.

M Duf: Bonjour Madamemoiselles. Ah, Miss Minchin... is this a new pupil for me, eh? I hope that is my good fortune.

Miss M: Yes M Dufarge. This is Sara. Her papa—Captain Crewe—is very anxious that she should begin the language. But I am afraid she has a childish prejudice against it. She does not seem to wish to learn.

M Duf: I am sorry of that, mademoiselle Sara. Perhaps, when we begin to study together, I may show you that it is a charming tongue.

Sara: I am so sorry Monsieur Dufarge, but there seems to have been a misunderstanding. I have not learned French through books but my Papa has always spoken to me in your language as my dear Mama, who died when I was born, was, herself, French. I have read and written in French many times and I love the language.

Sara: *Je suis navré Monsieur Dufarge, mais il y a un malentendu. Je n'avais pas étudié la langue française à l'école mais mon Papa parle toujours en votre langue, à cause de ma chère maman, qui a mouru quand j'étais jeune, et qui était la-même française. J'ai lu et écrit en français plusieurs fois et j'aime bien la langue.*

M.Duf: Ah, Miss Minchin, there is not much I can teach her. She has not LEARNED French; she **is** French. Her accent is exquisite.

While Sara was speaking in French, many of the students were starting to giggle, and look at Miss Minchin. Miss M is looking more and more furious.

Miss M: You ought to have told me.

Sara: I – I tried. I – I suppose I did not begin right.

There is an explosion of giggles from the girls.

Miss M: Silence, young ladies! Silence at once. *(she turns and glares at Sara who visibly shrinks in her chair, and she storms out)*

M. Duf: Ah Mademoiselle Sara, it is not good to make an enemy of Miss Minchin. Come, mes petites enfants. Let us continue.

FREEZE.... passage of time

M.Duf: *(to Ermengarde)* Non, non, non! Mademoiselle St John.. La mere; le pere; Ce n'est pas difficile.

Ermengarde: I am sorry Monsieur. I cannot do it. Please don't be angry.
Ermengarde is biting the ribbon on her plait, and beginning to cry.

M.Duf: Mademoiselle St John. Perhaps Mademoiselle Sara can help you. Please, go and sit next to her.

Lavinia: Nothing is going to help that dunce. She cannot even speak English, let alone try and speak French, even if the great Miss Sara does help her.