The Last of the Mohicans Study Guide

The Last of the Mohicans by James Fenimore Cooper

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BOOKRAGS

Contents

Introduction

When *The Last of the Mohicans* was published in 1826, James Fenimore Cooper was riding a growing wave of fame and critical acceptance. Following on the success of his last two books, *The Last of the Mohicans* was praised at the time for its nonstop adventure, realism, and intricate plotting. Using historical sources ranging from actual characters, such as Colonel Munro and Major Heyward, to John Heckewelder's *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs, of the Indian Nations, Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States,* and adding to them his own knowledge of the history of the area in which the novel was set, Cooper laid the foundation of his novel with fact and real events.

The Last of the Mohicans introduces Cooper's most well-known character, Natty Bumppo. It is an abduction narrative, and follows the adventures of Bumppo and his two Mohican Indian companions□father and son, Chingachgook and Uncas. They set out to free Munro's two daughters, Cora and Alice, from repeated kidnapping by a group of Huron Indians, led by their chief, Magua.

While well received and praised in its day, *The Last of the Mohicans* has since gone through a cycle of neglect and insult, and back into critical favor. Later critics found it very unrealistic, and considered its characters stereotyped. Cooper was taken to task for his portrayal of the Indians in the book. Uncas and Chingachgook were thought to be too idealized, and Magua far too villainous. The women in *The Last of the Mohicans* and Cooper's other books were considered to be mere damsels in distress, and completely undeveloped as characters. By the 1950s. Cooper had regained supporters, and was placed once again in the position as the father of the American novel. His lapses in style, sometimes poorly developed characterizations, and other literary offenses have been largely forgiven due to his role as pioneer of the American novel.

Author Biography

By the time *The Last of the Mohicans* was published in 1826, Cooper was the leading literary figure in America□a financial, critical, and public success. Cooper, born in New Jersey in 1789. had been a novelist for just six years, finding his calling at age thirty after a five-year stint in the navy.

His early years were largely marked by the influence of his father. He was sent to Yale, from which he was expelled after allegedly blowing up another student's door with gunpowder. His father then enlisted him in the navy. After his father's death in 1810, Cooper resigned his post and married. For the next ten years he settled into the life of a Federalist gentleman, serving in the state militia and as secretary to both the Bible and Agricultural Societies. It was not until 1820, his fortunes flagging and his inheritance running out. that Cooper began his literary career. While reading a popular English novel of the day to his wife. Cooper remarked Shat he could do better. His wife took him up on the challenge.

Published anonymously, his first work. *Precaution,* a drawing-room-style English comedy, was received poorly. He followed it with *The Spy,* a historical romance set in the Revolutionary War, which sold well and established the American novel as a genre. It was to set the tone of his literary output. For the next seventeen years Cooper worked only within the genre of historical fiction.

In 1823, Cooper published *The Pioneers,* the first of the five books of the Leatherstocking tales, which introduced Natty Bumppo. the archetypal frontiersman. The book sold 3.500 copies on its first day. Next came *The Pilot* (1823). a work of historical nautical Fiction, another genre that Cooper was to develop, laying the groundwork for Herman Melville's *Moby Dick.*

The Last of the Mohicans was published in 1826. Still the most widely read of Cooper's works.

it finds Natty Bumppo in the prime of his life. In the same year, Cooper and his family moved abroad, spending the next seven years in Europe. During that time, he published *The Prairie* (1827), a Leatherstocking tale about Bumppo at the end of his life, and *The Red Rover,* a work of nautical fiction. While abroad, Cooper became increasingly involved in politics, and began writing nonfiction as well as his novels, his first being *Motions of the Americans* (1828).

Upon returning home in 1833. he produced seven books (none fiction) in four years, four of them about European travel. In 1834, he and his family moved back to the family home in Cooper-stown. New York, where he would spend the rest of his life. Cooper continued to produce both non-fiction and novels until his death in 1851. including the last two books of the five Leaiherstocking tales, *The Path-Finder* (1840) and the *Deer-Slayer* (1841).

Plot Summary

The Journey Begins

Set in 1757 during the third year of the French and Indian War, the novel opens as Cora and Alice Munro are being escorted to Fort William Henry where they will meet up with the commander of the fort - their father, Colonel Munro. The two women are accompanied by Major Duncan Heyward, a gallant young officer who soon falls in love with Alice, and David Gamut, a ridiculous traveling psalm singer and music teacher. The small group is led by Magua, a mysterious and terrifying Huron, who suggests a "short-cut" that will lead them into an ambush he has prepared. The group are rescued from this fate when they run into Hawkeye, a skilled woodsman also known as Natty Bumppo (his birth name) and Le Longue Carabine (which means "Long Rifle"). With him are his two Mohican friends, Chingachgook and his son, Uncas. Major Heyward tells Hawkeye and his friends about his growing distrust of Magua, and the newcomers agree. Hawkeye and his companions then attempt to seize the "treacherous savage," but the guide escapes into the forest.

Hawkeye predicts that Magua will be back, and - fearing an attack by unfriendly Indians - leads the group to Glenn's Falls. The group takes shelter in a warren of caves behind the waterfall and spends an uneasy night. The sound of horses screaming early in the morning alerts them to danger, and they find themselves under attack by a band of Iroquois. Gamut is injured, and he, Cora, and Alice hide in the caves while the others plan a defense. Out in the forest Hawkeye, Heyward, Chingachgook, and Uncas engage in a bloody struggle with the Iroquois. They begin to run out of ammunition and prepare to die honorably. Cora begs them to go for help instead, so Hawkeye and the two Indians slip out down the river. Heyward stays to defend the girls, and they are all captured when a group of Hurons led by Magua enter the caves and uncover their hiding place.

Captured

Major Heyward attempts to trick Magua into releasing them, suggesting that Colonel Munro will pay good money to have his daughters returned. It seems to be working, until Magua asks to speak to Cora alone and reveals his true motives. Driven by a mix of lust for her and hatred of her father, Magua wants to take Cora as his wife. This will be his revenge upon Colonel Munro, who has whipped him in public for being drunk. He promises Cora that if she consents he will free her beloved sister, but she refuses to comply. Enraged, Magua stirs up the Hurons into a fury of vengeful feelings, and the whole group attacks the prisoners and lashes them to trees. As they stand waiting to be burnt alive, Heyward breaks free and struggles with one of their captors. Just as he is about to be killed, Hawkeye and the two Mohicans arrive at the scene. The Hurons, terrified of Le Longue Carabine, flee, and Alice, Cora, Gamut, and Heyward are freed. Again, Magua manages to elude them.

The group continues toward Fort William Henry only to find it besieged by 10,000 French troops led by the Marquis de Montcalm. In thick fog, they make a mad dash for the fort and are rescued at the last minute. The girls are joyously reunited with their father, Colonel Munro. Heyward asks the Colonel for Alice's hand in marriage. In response, Munro reveals some of his past in order to ensure Heyward's commitment to his daughter.

The Fort William Henry Massacre

The British await reinforcements from General Webb. De Montcalm intercepts a letter from Webb, and reveals to Munro and Heyward that no reinforcements are coming - Munro is to surrender the fort. The Marquis allows them to retain their military honor, and promises that they can leave the fort "unmolested." However, he neglects to arrange a troop escort for the defeated British, and as they leave the fort they are suddenly attacked by a group of 2,000 Indians. The British are massacred in the bloody attack, during which Magua recaptures Alice and Cora and takes them into the forest. Gamut follows.

Munro, Heyward, Hawkeye, Chingachgook, and Uncas, who is now in love with Cora, follow their trail north through the forest. They find Gamut who tells them that Alice is still held captive by the Hurons and Cora is with the more peaceful Delaware. Uncas is captured, but using a cunning plan of swapped identities, Heyward and Hawkeye rescue both Uncas and Alice. They flee to safety with the Delaware, who free Cora when Uncas reveals that he is a chief and a Delaware descendant. The next day, Magua and his men come to the Delaware camp to demand the return of their captives. Tamenund, the Delaware chief, judges that Magua's desire to marry Cora makes his claim on her legitimate. Uncas vows that he and his friends will pursue them.

Tragedy

Followed by Hawkeye, the Mohicans, and a group of warriors, Magua and Cora set off for the Huron village. The two groups come into bloody conflict, and Uncas, Hawkeye, Heyward, and Gamut chase Magua and two warriors into a cave. Cora is as brave and strong-willed now as she has shown herself to be in earlier situations, and she refuses to move when her captors demand that she must. Attempting to force her, Magua threatens to kill her. His companions take him all too seriously, and another Huron advances to stab her to death. Desperately attempting to avert the tragedy, Uncas leaps into the fray from an overhanging ledge. He is too late to save Cora, and in the battle that follows he is killed by Magua, who is then shot by Hawkeye. The final chapter is one of sorrow for both the whites and the Indians. The bereft Munro returns to his territory with Heyward and Alice, who are now engaged. Hawkeye returns to the forest with Chingachgook. As the English leave, Hawkeye pledges eternal friendship with Chingachgook, the "Last of the Mohicans."

Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Set in the "country which lies between the head waters of the Hudson and the adjacent lakes." Cooper describes the scene as the "bloody arena." The English and French armies are fighting for "their" settlers, and the Native Americans are either allies or enemies of both.

All the settlers are fearful, feeling as though they will lose no matter who wins. Their choices are slaughter and relocation under the French, who support the Indians; or detestable rule under the English King.

The story centers on the traverse between two forts - Fort Henry; held by a small group of Scotsmen; and Fort Edwards, manned by over 5,000 troops. Both forts are a defense against the invading French and the Indian raids. Within both forts, the residents prefer to hunker down inside their protective covers rather than expose themselves to the inferior, but more numerous French.

Fort Henry has sent an Indian runner to Fort Edward, asking for help to reinforce the fort against the approaching French army led by Montcalm. General Webb dispatches 1500 men to assist. At the end of the chapter is a significant description of two men. One is a shabby, vain man wearing soiled finery and a "vacant countenance." The shabby man looks at the Indian runner, described as wearing the knife and tomahawk of his tribe, but having an "air of neglect" about him. Lastly, we meet the two girls, the younger, gold hair and blue eyes revealed by a blowing veil, the older more mature and still hidden.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Cooper writes in an almost rhythmic prose; a way of writing that modern readers may consider wordy, or stilted. This sets the scene for us. The description of the land and the forts draw a picture of the story to come. The reader also meets General Munro's daughters who are being sent to their father in Fort Henry. One has to wonder why the girls would be sent from the safety of Fort Edward to a place that was under siege.

Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

The girls are being sent to Fort Henry with the troops. They elect to be led by the Indian scout that brought the original request, along with an officer/escort named Heyward. The group breaks away from the troops to follow a secret path. The "unnamed man" shows up on his horse, declaring his intent to join the group.

The man claims to be a Psalmist, a singer of sacred songs, mostly from the biblical King David. He launches into song, only to be reprimanded by Duncan Heyward. Heyward is concerned that extra noise will draw unwanted attention.

The reader learns in the last paragraph that the party is being watched by a "human visage as fiercely wild as savage art and unbridled passions could make it." The savage follows the party.

Chapter 2 Analysis

The group feels they will be safer away from the detachment, though this exposes them to the renegade Indians in the forest. David seems to be simple-minded, not understanding the danger of the forest. The reader knows the first stirrings of trouble with the last paragraph.

Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

Our point of view changes to "a few miles westward." We find two men waiting on a third. One seems to be of European stock, the other Indian. The Indian is named Chingachgook; the other man is Hawkeye. Chingachgook is telling Hawkeye of the battles of his people against the Maquas, or Iroquois. The Mohicans managed to beat back the Iroquois until the Dutch arrived with their "fire water."

Since then, the Mohicans have diminished and retreated into obscurity. Chingachgook's son Uncas is the "last of the Mohicans." Uncas arrives and reports that Iroquois are hiding in the woods, out for scalps and plunder. When Uncas kills a deer, he hears the column of men marching to the North.

Chapter 3 Analysis

The reader is introduced to Uncas, Chingachgook and Hawkeye. They are obviously friends of long standing. The reader learns the story of the rise and fall of the Mohican nation. Uncas is the last of his kind. The various tribes seem to be at war with each other on a regular basis. Cooper refers to the Indians throughout the book as savages. The culture is one of violence - killing to eat, killing to gain status, or killing to defend the tribe.

Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

The group with the girls encounters the Indian scout and hunter. They discover that they are off-track, walking away from Fort Henry. The Indian leading the group is declared to be a Huron, and therefore untrustworthy. It is argued that he was adopted by the Mohawk, and is not to be trusted.

Heyward is convinced of the guide's treachery. He plots with the hunter and companions to disable the guide. The Indians plan to sneak up on the guide while Heyward speaks to him, holding his attention. Heyward thinks he can take the guide himself and tries, only to have the guide run. A rifle shot is heard, and The reader assume the result.

It is getting dark, and the girls, Cora and Alice, are tired but unaware of the danger at hand.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The reader gets the first inkling of something amiss. Hawkeye and friends tell the group they are off the trail. The guide was raised by the Mohawks. The Mohawks were trustworthy. The guide was born a Huron and therefore untrustworthy. The men assume that the guide has gone back to the Huron and is leading them to an ambush. It seems a little harsh to kill the scout by ambush, but they cannot afford a traitor leading the women into danger.

Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The treacherous guide was wounded but not caught. Heyward wanted to pursue. The hunter and scout convinced him to stay, as they would be running into a larger band of enemies. Heyward, noting the darkening sky, asks the two Indians and the scout to help lead the group to safety.

The three agree, with two conditions. One, that they be silent. The second is to tell no one of the secret place to which they will be led. Cora and Alice are placed in a canoe with the scout on one side and Heyward on the other. They float down the river for "many rods." The rest of the party takes the horses downstream. The canoe is used to ferry three people at a time to the "secret place." There, they are safe for a time.

Chapter 5 Analysis

A rod equals 16.5 feet, or 5.03 meters. The group needs to get to safety before dark. Cooper does not say if there is danger from bears or other large predators. Perhaps the only dangerous predator is man. One wonders how "secret" the cave is if others know about it.

Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The reader is given a clear description of young Uncas. "The strangeness of his dress, the iron-like inflexibility of his frame, and the singular campaign of quick, vigilant sagacity, and of exquisite simplicity, that by turns usurped the possession of his muscular features....."

The group is secured in the cavern behind the waterfall. The deer killed earlier is carved and dressed with salt. The fire is kept low. Uncas serves as chef to the group.

Hawkeye asks the name of the singer. "David Gamut" is the reply. Hawkeye is curious about a man who has never handled a gun. Gamut declares that he is not an explorer, or even much of a hiker. "I follow no other than my own high vocation, which is instruction in sacred music!"

Hawkeye, now amused, agrees that a man should follow his gift. He suggests a song to relax the group. The song is interrupted by a sound that no one can identify. A quick check outside shows nothing amiss. The group moves to the back cave to sleep.

Heyward speaks to the girls of their father. He relates the affection the father has for each. Heyward tells the girls of their father's struggle between wanting to see the girls, and leaving them in the safety of the Fort. As the chapter closes, the reader hears the cry again.

Chapter 6 Analysis

Cooper gives us a description in romantic prose of Uncas as a noble savage. Contrasted to that is David Gamut, described as dirty and unkempt. David is loud and seems to be a little simple-minded. Uncas is quiet and grave, deferring to the wisdom of his elders. When he does contribute, it is insightful and intelligent. The girls' father is in Fort Henry. Again, one has to wonder at the decision to move the girls from the safety of Fort Edwards to the besieged Fort Henry.

Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Hawkeye feels the sound is a warning for them to remain hidden. Cora wonders if it could be a war cry, or something to frighten them. The party moves out of the cavern in order to hear the sound. When the sound comes again, Heyward identifies it as the cry of a horse in terror or pain.

The men realize that wolves must be scaring the horses. Uncas takes a firebrand to scare off the wolves threatening the horses. The relieved party goes back to the cavern.

All except Hawkeye and the Indians sleep. The wakeful ones sit still and silent, watching in the night. At midnight, Hawkeye wakes the group, so they may continue the journey. Hawkeye goes to bring the canoe.

Suddenly the air is filling with yells and war cries. Gamut imprudently stands to see the source of the noise, only to be brought down senseless on the rock. The girls are sent to the back cave with the senseless singer. Hawkeye and the others return fire, attempting to ascertain where - and how many Iroquois roamed nearby.

Heyward and Hawkeye spot four men hiding behind a few drifted logs at the head of the waterfall. A fifth man is washed over the edge. The four Iroquois rush at the defenders. Two fall to rifle shots, two remain. Hawkeye dispatches one, and Heyward struggles with the fourth. Heyward is being pushed backward to the lip of the falls. He despairs when he realizes that his aggressor is trying to send both of them over. Uncas saves him by cutting the arm of the Iroquois and anchoring Heyward.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Hawkeye is superstitious, thinking the unknown sound is a warning. This is a fearful side of Hawkeye that the reader sees rarely. When Heyward identifies the sound, there is general relief. Not only is the unknown known, but the group can also do something about it.

When the war cry sounds David shows his ignorance by standing up to look. He nearly pays for it with his life. One has to wonder at the thought process of someone who knows nothing about the wilderness or survival, venturing out into the woods.

The man that Duncan Heyward struggles with is willing to lose his own life to take the enemy down with him. On the other hand, maybe he knew he would die anyway and had nothing to lose.

Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Chapter 8 opens with a description of the battle between the Iroquois and the band of travelers. Bullets whiz among the rocks as Hawkeye advises the men to conserve their shot. Heyward and Uncas offer hands of friendship and admiration to each other.

A bullet hits the rock near Heyward's head. They look up to see an Iroquois in an oak tree that came out over the river. All four men work together to flush the bird from the nest, finally knocking him out of the tree.

Uncas shouts in despair when a Huron is seen moving away with the canoe. The situation is even more desperate when Hawkeye shows the empty state of his bullet pouch. Even the girls join the discussion of what to do. Uncas prepares to die. Cora encourages the men to try the river. They refuse, but she insists it is the best way. The men can get help and rescue the women with a larger group.

Cora insists that the men move out separately, that they have a better chance. The girls move back into the cavern to await their fate.

Chapter 8 Analysis

It seems odd that expert woodsmen would camp in a place with only one way out On the other hand, they are not soldiers so they may not consider the tactical placement of a camp. Perhaps maybe they were so concerned with the comfort of the ladies that they didn't think ahead.

Cora is shown as a levelheaded girl. She understands that she and her sister will slow the men down. She is also the one who suggests walking down the river even without the canoe. The bigger question would be if the men could return with help in time to do any good.

Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Hawkeye and the Indians have left separately to get help. Heyward moves the still-groggy David into the back cavern. They cover the entrance with blankets, and pile brush in front as best they can. It is quiet for now.

David feels better and begins to sing quietly. It soothes the girls and relaxes Heyward. However, this peace is not to be. A wild yell is heard coming from the middle of the island. The dead bodies of the attackers have been discovered by the rest of the band. They explore more carefully, and find Hawkeye's abandoned rifle. It is recognized.

The band finds the outer cavern and explores. The blood on the leaves from David's wound is assumed to be Hawkeye's, and the Indians rejoice at the death of an enemy. The hidden group braces for discovery. Fortunately, the Indians assume that the pile of brush is just that. As they search the outer cavern, they throw more branches on the pile, thus hiding their prey more effectively.

Relief is not long, though. Alice spots Renard, the treacherous guide who had led them astray originally. He alerts the band of Iroquois, who drag the four from the safety of the cave.

Chapter 9 Analysis

It seems that Renard knows of the place, or he is just incredibly lucky in finding the back cavern. There is anger at finding the dead bodies of the first group of Indians. You would think that a war party would expect casualties. Maybe the anger is more because there are no dead enemies.

Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The Huron (Iroquois) badger the captives for information about Hawkeye; known as "La Longue Carabine." Heyward turns to Renard, requesting that he translate. Renard contemptuously complies. When told that Hawkeye and the other two had left by floating down the river, the band reacts in anger and frustration. One Indian threatens to scalp Alice. When Heyward springs to aid her, his hands are bound.

The chief has other ideas for his captives. The four are placed in the canoe and taken to the south bank of the river. There, the band splits. The horses go with the larger group, while the captives are left with six men and two horses. Renard is the leader. Heyward attempts to gain the trust of Renard. He relates how well the English have treated him and how his native band hurt him. Heyward goes into great detail of the reward awaiting Renard should he deliver the girls to their father. Heyward continues with a promise of a river of firewater.

The girls are mounted on the horses. Renard (Magua) leads the group for miles. To Heyward's despair, the path leads away from the forts.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Hawkeye has gone and the Huron must content themselves with the four captives in hand. It seems odd that they would threaten to kill valuable captives. There is disappointment in finding Hawkeye's rifle without Hawkeye. He has killed a large number of Huron. He would be a valuable prisoner.

When Heyward speaks to Magua of the reward for returning the girls, Magua does not respond. Heyward is wise to talk to Magua alone. This sets Magua apart, acknowledging that he is the most important Huron there. Magua speaks of his desire for revenge against the girl's father, and no amount of reward will avenge his anger. It seems that anger is stronger than greed.

Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

While they rest, Heyward wanders over to speak with Magua (Renard). Heyward hopes that Magua has thought of the reward. He encourages Magua again to take the girls to their father.

Magua speaks to Cora alone. The reader learns of his original disgrace. He was the son of a Chief, and didn't see a white man until he was twenty. Magua drank the "fire water." He behaved so badly when drunk, that the Hurons drove him out. Magua joined the Mohawks, who fought under the command of Cora's father.

Magua broke the rules set by the General. He was whipped for drunkenness. Cora discovers that their present situation is revenge for the act. Cora begs him to release Alice. She offers to stay that he may revenge on her alone. Magua counter-offers with this: Stay with him as wife, "draw his water, hoe his corn, and cook his venison."

Cora reacts with disgust. Magua then speaks to his group, goading them into torture for the captives. The four are tied to branches so they can watch the preparations for pain. Magua makes the offer to Cora again. Heyward cries that he prefers death to her sacrifice. The question is put to young Alice. After a bit of thought she replies, "No, no, no; better that we die as we have lived, together!"

Magua throws his axe at Alice, cutting some of her hair. The maddened Heyward breaks his bounds to tackle a man ready to throw a second axe. The two men grapple; Heyward ends on the bottom. As a knife descends to end Heyward's life, the wielder is shot and he falls over, dead.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Does Magua want to punish Cora's father by making her a squaw? Maybe he has admired Cora from afar and he sees his chance to keep her. The threat of torture seems to be just that. Magua again tries to coerce Cora into becoming his squaw.

Alice is presented as a delicate creature who faints at the slightest stress. Here, she boldly decides for death rather than a miserable life for her sister. It almost costs her life. Magua is a warrior, a chief among his people. He can throw the tomahawk to land right where he wants it.

Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

The Hurons are shocked into silence at the death of the warrior. The cry of "La Longue Carabine" rises as Hawkeye leaps from the bushes. The two Mohicans add to the disorder and terror as they dive into the midst of the scene.

The battle is pitched, but short. One Huron throws an axe at Cora, grazing her shoulder and cutting her bonds. Rather than run, she flies to her sister, attempting to free her. The man grabs Cora and throws her back over his knee. He holds her hair and gloats. This is his mistake, as Uncas essentially "cannonballs" into the man's chest. The foiled scalper is soon dispatched.

The battle is over except for Chingachgook and Magua. They are evenly matched and they raise a great cloud of dust. The others run to help. Magua is stabbed and falls, but manages to get away. The rest of the Huron are scalped.

Hawkeye frees David. The two engage in a long conversation on the merits of protection vs. non-violence. The group moves a short distance from the battle site. They rest and eat. Hawkeye explains that they elected to come back when they heard the whoop of discovery. The group mounts and begins the long trek back to safety.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Rescue arrives just in time. The men with Magua are no match for the Mohicans and Hawkeye. The man who grabs Cora stops to gloat and pays for that mistake with his life. All of the captors except Magua are killed. Our heroes likely feel that the worst is over. The conversation between David and Hawkeye spotlights opposite views of the use of deadly force.

Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Hawkeye leads the group for several miles. They stop at a decayed blockhouse for rest. Hawkeye and Chingachgook remember this place from a battle long ago. A bed of branches is laid in the corner for the girls. There is a spring there with clear water. The two Indians take the watch. Heyward tries to stay awake, but falls asleep anyway.

When the moon is high, they wake and prepare to move on. Before they leave the safety of the thicket, they hear the sounds of men. The Huron that escaped has caught up with his allies. They move closer to the hill. The pursuers do not see the space where the group entered the thicket, and split up to search.

Two Huron enter the area of the blockhouse. The hidden ones tense for battle. However, the Huron recognize the mass grave next to the blockhouse. They respectfully leave the dead alone.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Hawkeye and Chingachgook lead the group to a place where a battle had been fought some years before. They feel safe, but still keep a watch. When the Huron arrive, the group must hide. The Indian respect for the dead is the only thing that keeps the group from discovery.

Chapter 14

Chapter 14 Summary

The intrepid travelers leave in the opposite direction of the Huron. They walk for hours. At a pond, Hawkeye recalls another battle with the French. He is wary of the pond, superstitious. He states that men were buried so quickly that some were not yet dead. He fears the undead.

Movement is seen, and a voice in French asks, "Who (goes) here?" Heyward readies for a fight, but Cora replies to the young sentinel in perfect French. Cora tells of being taken as prisoners. She states that they are going back to the fort. The sentinel lets them go with a friendly farewell.

The group now must go around the invading army to avoid meeting other sentinels. The way is rougher and more difficult. They finally make their way to the lake next to the fort. There they discover to their dismay the tents of Montcalm's army.

Cannons fire on the fort. The girls wish to go to Montcalm and ask for safe passage to the fort. Hawkeye refuses, stating that they will be scalped before they could reach the tent. When fog rolls in, they attempt to get closer to the fort. They are heard by the French and fired on. They are uninjured, but it seems as if the entire army is pursuing them.

They get turned around, but they find their way back to the fort. There is a sally from the fort, and Alice cries out to her father. He hears the voice and finds the girls. The chapter ends with the girls held in the embrace of their grateful father.

Chapter 14 Analysis

The reader might consider it cruel that Chingachgook took the sentinel's scalp. The sentinel should have taken them to his leader. It was a good idea for the girls to go to Montcalm. He likely would have allowed them to join the fort. If not, at least they would have been treated well until an exchange could be arranged. The reader must ask the question of why a loving father would let the girls face danger just to see them.

Chapter 15

Chapter 15 Summary

The chapter opens with the fifth day of the siege. Heyward and the girls have been in the fort for four days. A disturbance outside the fort shows Hawkeye being led by a French officer to the fort. Hawkeye's arms are bound and he looks haggard and despondent.

Heyward heads toward the office to see what was going on. He is stopped by the girls walking in the courtyard. Alice chastises him for not coming to see them since the arrival. Heyward notices Cora is not happy and asks if he may call on her.

Heyward arrives at the general's office quickly. Hawkeye has been admitted. The letter he carried has been taken, but he reports that there is no relief coming from Fort Edward. Heyward and General Munro discuss how they may learn the contents of the letter. Munro has been invited to dinner in the French camp under a flag of truce. He asks Heyward to go in his place as his representative.

That evening, Heyward presents himself to the French camp. When he is brought to Montcalm, he sees the treacherous face of Magua, the faithless scout. Montcalm asks Heyward if he has come to discuss terms of surrender. Heyward replies they are not to that point. They engage in verbal battle. Heyward tries to learn the contents of the letter. Montcalm tell Heyward that the men he is counting to rescue are not coming. Heyward tires of the verbal sparring and he returns to his general.

Chapter 15 Analysis

It is surprising that Hawkeye was caught by the French army. He was an expert woodsman. Maybe it was simply the overwhelming numbers that left no place to hide. It would seem more prudent to send Hawkeye with a verbal message, rather than a letter that could be taken from him.

The reader may assume that Magua has been working for the French all along. His presence means that Montcalm knows everything that Magua learned from and about the English forts and fighting force.

Chapter 16

Chapter 16 Summary

Heyward enters the general's office unannounced to find a family tableau. Alice sits on her father's knee while Cora looks on fondly. Heyward watches for a moment, and then Alice catches his reflection. They greet Heyward and retire to their rooms.

General Munro does not yet wish to talk of the French general's message. Instead, he draws Heyward to admitting his desire to become a son-in-law. The general happily assumes it is Cora. He reacts strangely when Heyward declares his wish for Alice. Munro tells Heyward of his young love for a girl named Alice Graham. Her father would not accept Munro. The young man went off to service.

He served in the West Indies where he met Cora's mother. Cora's mother was the product of white/black union. Munro checks to see if her mixed blood is the reason Heyward does not prefer her. Heyward counters with the declaration that he finds Alice the more bewitching of the two - no shame for Cora.

Munro's wife died, and Munro moved Cora back to his beloved Scotland. There he found that Alice Graham had refused all offers for marriage. There was nothing to stand in the way of their union, and they wed. Their time was short, as Alice died during childbirth a year later.

Munro sheds tears for the memory of Alice, and then abruptly changes the subject. He enquires of the message from Montcalm. Heyward tells of his failure to worm the message from the wily General. In veiled words, Montcalm had told that he would talk only to his counterpart in the fort.

Arrangements are made for an honor guard. They sally forth from the fort bearing a white flag. The French respond in kind and the two generals meet. The two men go back and forth on the strength of numbers and conditions of fortification. When Munro counters that help is on the way, Montcalm hands him the letter.

Munro suffers a blow to his entire being. When Munro drops the letter, Heyward picks it up. There, signed by General Webb was the message that no help was forthcoming, and suggested they surrender. The first thought is to fight to the bitter end, but the Frenchman offers generous terms.

They may retain their colors and arms. The turnover will be done in a way honoring the spirit of the English and allow them to retain what dignity they may. Munro declares, "I have lived to see two things in my old age, that never did I expect to behold. An Englishman afraid to support a friend, and a Frenchman too honest to profit by his advantage." He returns to the fort as a broken man.

Heyward stays at the French camp to finalize the agreement. The fort is told that a truce has been signed. The English will begin packing for the weary trip to Fort Henry in the morning.

Chapter 16 Analysis

The family scene that Heyward witnesses may give us a clue as to why the general needed them. The reader learns that the girls have different mothers who are both dead. Normal human psychology does not want to face difficulty. When the General talks to Heyward about becoming a son-in-law, it is a way to avoid having to face the French general.

When the Generals meet, there is a battle to be won by words. General Munro desperately tries to convince Montcalm of his invulnerability and warns General Montcalm that help is on the way. Munro is starting out weak and doesn't have much to go on. Montcalm has the upper hand. When he gives the letter to Munro, the battle is done. Montcalm proves himself a gentleman with his generous terms and regard to honor.

Chapter 17

Chapter 17 Summary

The chapter starts with a lone man making his way to the outskirts of the French camp. The reader learns that it is General Montcalm. He leans against a tree, observing the English fort. He spies a man across the water, and understands that it is his counterpart. Munro has come out alone to contemplate the dreaded morning.

Montcalm sees an Indian arrive in a boat and take aim at the unprotected Scotsman. Montcalm grabs the rifle and spoils the aim. He commences to argue with none other than Le Renard, the traitor. Renard is contemptuous of the treaty. He complains that no scalps have been taken. Renard wants revenge, and does not accept the English as friends. Montcalm reasons with him, but the Indian stalks off to the tents.

In the morning, the English make ready to leave. The men line up with the muskets. The women and children try to gather their baggage. Heyward checks on the Munro girls. He must remain with the general and his men. He is worried about the safety of the women. David plans to go with them, to remind Indians and French stragglers of the treaty.

The call to move out sets over three thousand people in motion. They pass the French army who is holding to the promise of respect. When they look to the hill, however, they see "a dark cloud of savages, eying the passage of their enemies, and hovering at a distance like vultures; that were only kept from swooping on their prey, by the presence and restraint of a superior army."

When the non-combatants begin to pass, the Indians approach to steal items from a merchant. Magua settles it and the parties move on. When a bright shawl catches another's eye, he snatched at it. The woman wraps her infant in the shawl and struggles. The Indian snatches the child out of its mother's arms and holds the infant up by its feet. He motioned for a trade. The woman threw all she had at him, begging for her child. The shawl was snatched by another, and the original thief loses his prize. In retaliation, he murders the baby, dashing its head against a rock. The mother's anguish is cut short by his hatchet cleaving her forehead.

Magua shouts a war cry and 2000 Indians rush from the cover of the trees. The slaughter of innocents begins while the horrified armies on both sides run to the arena. Montcalm does not order his men to shoot.

During the melee, Magua snatches Alice, while Cora follows behind. He places them both on a horse and takes off. David meanwhile has lifted his voice in song. He hopes to soothe the savage mind. The Indians do not harm him as they think him mad. David follows the women on another horse.

Chapter 17 Analysis

Renard (Magua) is furious that the battle has ended so quickly and so peacefully. He has been consumed by his lust for revenge. His desire for revenge has inflamed the Huron warriors. This is a major mistake. They had been allies of the French. Now, all hands would be against the Huron.

Cooper does not say if Magua had planned to slaughter the women and children. However, revenge seeks only to hurt. Magua uses the cover of the slaughter to grab Alice, knowing that Cora will follow. One had to wonder why he did not grab Cora.

David tries to alleviate the madness, only to be thought mad himself. This protects him and allows him to stay with the women.

Chapter 18

Chapter 18 Summary

The reader is brought to the scene of slaughter, now quiet. Five men look among the dead. Uncas and his father, Hawkeye, Munro, and Heyward are searching for Cora and Alice. Uncas finds a piece of Alice's veil. There is hope she and her sister are still alive, though captive. They find the trail left by Cora and Magua. They learn that David has pursued. They can do nothing for now, so go back to the plain to consider the next step.

Chapter 18 Analysis

The girls have retained enough presence of mind to know that rescue will come. Dropping bits of their clothing and trying to leave traces sounds like the practical Cora. The men realize that this chase may take a long time, and a successful end is not assured.

Chapter 19

Chapter 19 Summary

The men spend the night in the ruin of Fort Henry. Heyward hears something and asks Uncas to check. They warn Chingachgook. He pretends to relax, but is ready to duck when someone shoots at him. It is only one, and Uncas gives chase.

Uncas returns with the scalp, identifying it as Oneida, a supposed ally. The men engage in discussion of the future. They plan to journey and look for the girls.

The chapter ends with father and son playfully conversing with each other. Uncas rakes the coals to warm his father's feet, as he lies asleep. All the men rest with Hawkeye as watch.

Chapter 19 Analysis

Even in the ruins of Fort Henry, surrounded by the dead, the men are not safe. With the discovery of a supposed ally attacking, the men know they cannot trust anyone. The reader is allowed to see the tender side of Chingachgook and Uncas as the father and son enjoy each other's presence. The love and respect between them is obvious.

Chapter 20

Chapter 20 Summary

The men quit the fort carefully. They wish to leave no trace. They know the Oneida was alone, but his group may be on their trail soon. The canoe is placed in the water and the men start the search. Paddling across the lake, they see a wisp of smoke from a low campfire. Before they can approach, two canoes give chase. Shots are exchanged, though no one is badly wounded. Our group manages to pull ahead, and lands on a small island. They make a false trail to throw off the Huron. There is another water journey; then the canoe is hidden in bushes. The group prepares to walk from here.

Chapter 20 Analysis

This journey is not expected to be easy. Likely, Magua has left men behind in order to slow the rescue. They use the same techniques as the Indians to leave no trail.

Chapter 21

Chapter 21 Summary

Hawkeye heads north, hoping to find the trail. Uncas locates a sign near a brook. He waited until asked, respecting his father. The trail follows the valleys. There are a few false leads, but the group manages to keep finding the mark of the horses.

Their hopes of catching up with Le Renard and the girls are dashed when the horses are found wandering by themselves. The girls are now on foot and the trail will be more difficult to trace. However, there are no impressions of female feet. Hawkeye says the women are being carried. After a time, a concealed trail is found. There are the small footprints of the women.

The men travel on until they draw close to the Huron camp. Heyward spots a man walking slowly to the camp and watches. As he draws close, Heyward recognizes the bedraggled singer, David Gamut.

Chapter 21 Analysis

Uncas defers to his elders, waiting to be asked for his advice. Cooper wants us to see the noble side of the race in the father and son relationship. The reader is not given the details of the journey, other than a quick mention of the difficulty. The men expect to find a war camp, but this is a village. This complicates things. David is left to his own devices. He wanders about freely and without undue notice. He is obviously considered harmless.

Chapter 22

Chapter 22 Summary

David is happy to see them and explains the situation. He assures Munro that the girls are unspoiled. It seems the Indians think him slightly mad. His song in the middle of the slaughter astounded the killers. They allow him to come and go. He explains that the girls have been separated. Alice is with the Huron women about two miles away. Cora has been placed with a neighboring tribe farther away. Heyward asks David why he has not escaped. The reply is that he had wished to remain as close to the girls as he could.

After careful questioning, it is surmised that some of the Delaware people were within the tribe where Cora was sent. A plan is devised. David is going to back to the Huron, and Heyward insists on going with him. Hawkeye asks if he is tired of seeing the sun rise and set. Heyward will not be swayed, and he asks to be painted as a fool or clown. Chingachgook paints Heyward as a friendly fool. The plan is for Heyward to go as a French juggler. David and Heyward make their way to the Huron village.

Chapter 22 Analysis

Separating the captives is a common way of demoralizing them. Left alone among hostile strangers, the prisoners must rely on their own strength. Together the prisoners would encourage each other. The men use the Huron culture to disguise Heyward. His paint declares him an entertainer, a fool and therefore a non-threat.

Chapter 23

Chapter 23 Summary

Heyward and David are met just outside the village by a pack of whooping children. This gets the attention of the warriors who quietly watch as Heyward and David go into the center lodge. Heyward is nervous. An old man speaks to Heyward in Huron. Heyward replies in French. After a pause, the old man uses French to speak. Heyward claims to know the art of healing. That is met with a bit of skepticism. Then the old man inquires about Heyward's paint.

"When an Indian chief comes among his white father, he lays aside his buffalo robe to carry the shirt that is offered him. My brothers have given me paint, and I wear it." The Indians approve of Heyward's reply, and he breathed a little easier

A fierce cry like the howl of a wolf is heard, and the entire village moves out to the center. It is the warriors returning. One carries a pole with several scalps hung on it. The sound was called the "death-halloo" by white folks. It was intended as cry of victory and the wail of the victims.

Heyward observes the Indians lining up in two rows. They all have weapons of some sort and leave a tunnel between them. There are two men that have lagged behind the rest. One walks proudly, head up, ready for what was to come. The other bows his head as though embarrassed or afraid. The proud man walks toward the lines, and then suddenly runs around, running to escape. He dashes around the village, dodging fires and people in his desperate run. The young man dashes past Heyward with a large warrior in pursuit. The warrior is about to tomahawk the runner when Heyward sticks out his foot and trips the warrior. This allows the young man to reach a painted pole by the door of the lodge.

The young man holds the pole, safe for now. The council will decide his fate. Heyward follows the crowd in hopes his part will not be noticed. The crowd is denied its sport and grumbles. An old woman approaches the man at the pole and begins to curse at him, calling him a woman and insulting his race. Others join in the taunting of the prisoner, but the man simply stands holding the pole. He turns his head and Heyward is dismayed to see the face of Uncas. Uncas is brought into the lodge to await the judgment of the council. Heyward slips in to watch. The elders speak among themselves for a time. They tell Uncas that his companions would be brought in, then all three would be judged. Uncas replied that he'd heard the rifle of Hawkeye fire twice. The Huron would not be coming back.

The other man is a stranger. He, too, enters the lodge, walking as a man condemned. When the elders ask how Uncas, a skilled warrior, has been caught, he points to the other man. "He followed the steps of a flying coward, and was caught in a snare," explains Uncas. An old woman walks up to Uncas with a torch and looks at him. Uncas

simply stares off into the distance, unmoving. When she comes to her fellow Huron, he is clearly frightened, "writhing in irrepressible agony. The woman gave a sad howl. The chief gently moved her away."

The chief speaks to the young man named Reed that Bends. He tells of the young man's boastful tone in the village. He decries the cowardice the youth has shown in battle three times. His name would never be spoken again, forgotten. The young man bares his chest and seems to be glad of the knife that enters his heart. The squaw threw down her torch, and all except Uncas, Heyward and the dead youth left the lodge.

Chapter 23 Analysis

Heyward claims to dress as he does to honor the Huron. This gives him approval but not necessarily trust. Somehow, the entire village has learned about the captive and the dishonored man. Obviously, the painted pole is some sort of "safe base" where the accused may have protection until the elders decide his fate. The reader learns the man at the pole is Uncas. He was bent on pursuing the runner and was caught.

The Indian culture despises cowards. The reader is not told who the old woman was, perhaps the mother or grandmother of the boy. Young men are given three times before they are considered cowards. This would allow the young man facing his first fight to be given another (two) chances to prove himself. However, showing cowardice or fright three times is fatal. The chief cannot allow himself to be associated with a coward, so he must essentially disown his son. Cooper shows us the agony of the father even while he makes the declaration as chief.

Chapter 24

Chapter 24 Summary

Uncas quietly assures Heyward that the others were safe. He tells Heyward to pretend not to know him. Heyward goes out and wanders around the huts, hoping to find a sign of Alice. He fails to see her and returns to the lodge. The elders have returned and are discussing an expedition to the head of the Hirican River. Heyward moves in quietly, hoping for a chance to just sit in silence while he gathers his thoughts. This was not to be. The chief addresses him saying, "My Canada father does not forget his children, I thank him." He goes on to describe an "evil spirit" in the wife of one of the young men. The chief asks Heyward to frighten it away.

Heyward knows of the Indian ways to frighten the spirits. He feels this could improve his situation. Heyward keeps to his character by saying mysteriously, "Spirits differ; some yield to the power of wisdom, while others are too strong." The chief asks Heyward to try. They wait several minutes while Heyward chafes under the constricts of a culture that values appearances. Just as it seems the chief is getting up, a large warrior enters the lodge. Heyward is horrified to see Magua.

The man sits and smokes a while. Then the chief asks if they have caught the moose. Magua affirms it and suggests Reed that Bends should join the men and help. The group of men drops their pipes as one. They are silent, the young ones rolling their eyes to the chief. The chief explains, "It is a lie. I had no son. He who was called by that name is forgotten; his blood was pale, and it came not from the veins of a Huron." The chief continued, saying that the Great Spirit had decided that his family should end. Despite his strong words, the face of the chief could not hide his anguish. He pulled his blanket close to his face and left the room to suffer, alone and childless.

Another chief breaks the silence that follows by conversing with Magua. He comments that the Delaware have been prowling about. He points to the captured man. Magua looks at him and calls him "Le Cerf Agile." The rest of the tribe is surprised to hear the name of the great warrior. Magua proceeds to tell the story of the attack and the men killed by Le Longue Carabine. He makes no mention of his part in kidnapping the girls. Magua uses all his powers of speech to rile up the Huron against Uncas. He tells of the dead men arriving in the afterworld naked. He tells them only the death of Uncas will clear them. They will load the back of Uncas to bring to the Huron dead.

Magua leaves the lodge. The chief sits for a while, and then leads Heyward out of the area he had searched. They head towards a mountain. A bear sits in the path, but the chief merely walks by. Heyward has heard that bears are sometime domesticated by the Indians. He walks by, watchful of the beast. The chief pushes aside a bark covering and enters.

There is a large cave, divided into apartments. Heyward sees the women surrounded by a group. David is there and sings a hymn. The bear has followed them, and seemed to be singing in echo. David said to Heyward, "She expects you and is at hand."

Chapter 24 Analysis

Magua twists the truth about the attack. His makes no mention of the slaughter of innocents or his part in kidnapping the girls. It would seem that he wants no witnesses to his revenge. The chief may suspect that Heyward is not who he claims to be. The request for healing may be a test. David's message to Heyward is not unclear; it must refer to Alice.

Chapter 25

Chapter 25 Summary

The chief sends everyone away, but the bear stays. Heyward begins what he hopes looks like mystic passes and chanting. Every time he begins the bear growls and interrupts. The chief feels his presence is upsetting the animal and he leaves. Heyward is very nervous and looks around for a weapon. Then the head of the bear falls over to reveal Hawkeye! They discuss what has happened since they parted.

Hawkeye goes to look for Alice, while Heyward washes his face. Hawkeye finds the girl in the cavern surrounded by plunder. She and Heyward meet gladly. They tell each other the happenings since the girls were taken. Heyward tells Alice that her father has given permission for them to marry. Alice is pleased. They are interrupted by the appearance of Magua. He has entered the cavern from another entrance. As Magua goes to tell of the new captive, he is surprised by Hawkeye in the form of the bear. Hawkeye and Heyward tie the Indian and gag him.

They make a plan for escape. Heyward comes out of the cavern with a blanket-wrapped bundle. He tells the chief and the group outside that the spirit is locked in the rock. He tells them to stay out and to watch for it. He says he is taking the woman to make her stronger. Hawkeye sends the lovers to the Delaware camp. He stays behind to rescue Uncas.

Chapter 25 Analysis

The Indian reverence for animals works against the Huron in this case. Hawkeye is able to speak alone to Heyward. He finds Alice and brings her. The surprise by Magua is actually a blessing. They now know a back way in and out of the cavern. The Indian woman and Alice must have been close in size for the blanket ruse to work.

Chapter 26

Chapter 26 Summary

Hawkeye searches the village for the place Uncas was held. He finds the small hut where David sits. David is startled when the bear speaks to him. Hawkeye identifies himself and asks for the location of Uncas. David leads Hawkeye (the bear) to the center of the village. There are three guards in front. David tells them the bear is going to take the courage of the prisoner. He convinces the men to stand away so they do not lose their courage also.

Hawkeye and David find Uncas tied at the back of the lodge. David gives Hawkeye his clothes and accoutrements. Uncas dons the form of the bear, and David is in Indian garb. David sits in the shadow, pretending to be the prisoner. Hawkeye warns him to keep his feet pulled up so the ruse is not found too quickly.

It is dark, and Hawkeye walks out as David. He begins to sing. Uncas follows as the bear. They walk out of the village together.

Chapter 26 Analysis

Telling the guards that the bear was going to take away the courage was the best way to make sure the guards would not go in with them. They were there when Reed that Bends was killed for lack of courage. Though David is not mad, he seems to be somewhat simple-minded. Hawkeye should have kept that in mind. He does not stay still for long and he is discovered.

Chapter 27

Chapter 27 Summary

The Indians guarding the prisoner creep in to see the bewitched man. It only takes a few minutes for David to move his foot near the fire. That might have worked until he turned his head and the guards knew they had been tricked. The yell of anger wakes the whole village. Magua is called for and no one knows where he is. The deception is explained to the chiefs. They check the cavern and find the sick woman. She is dead.

They find Magua and cut his bonds. He is very angry and even his friends are wary of him. The chiefs blame the Delaware, and Magua tells them it was Hawkeye, "Le Longue Carabine." When the girls were brought, they were separated. Magua kept Alice close to him so that he had power over Cora.

The young men want to attack the Delaware camp to find the fugitives. Magua counsels patience. He waits until morning then takes a group of men into the forest. He stops to speak to the otters as cousins. As he leaves, a large otter pulls its head back inside the den. The reader discovers the otter is Chingachgook.

Chapter 27 Analysis

David must not understand how important it is for him to remain unseen. Hawkeye and Uncas are barely out of the camp when the deception is found. When the Huron find Magua, he is absolutely furious. He shows his craftiness in counseling the warriors to wait. He's lost the only hold he had over Cora and must think of a new plan.

Chapter 28

Chapter 28 Summary

As the sun rises, we see people going about their normal tasks. It seems to be a little busy for early morning. Eyes keep returning to a large silent lodge. On a rock ledge above the village, a man appears with his arms open in greeting. His paint is friendly and his dress benign. The men welcome him to the village. The stranger walks through greeting the men and ignoring the women. It is Magua - Le Renard Subtil.

The chief invites Magua to have breakfast with him and the other chiefs. The conversation during the meal is light, focused on the hunt. When the food has been cleared, the real battle of wits began. Magua offers to take Cora off their hands. His offer is refused twice. "She is welcome," is the reply. Then Magua brings out small gifts. These are trinkets stolen from the dead bodies of the slaughtered women and children. He carefully apportions them out with compliment and grandeur. This makes the atmosphere lighter and the Delaware relax a bit.

Magua asks about the "strange moccasins" that have arrived recently. The Delaware chief states that strangers may share the fire. Magua claims they are spies. The chief counters with the statement that Magua took the women in battle, so that is not possible. Magua then declares that Le Longue Carabine is in the camp. This causes much bustle about the camp. Finally, all is ready and the patriarch of the village, Tamenund, comes out and sits. His people are arranged around him in a circle. Young men are sent to bring the three strangers into their midst.

Chapter 28 Analysis

Magua unconsciously copies Heyward by appearing in friendly paint in order to gain access to the village. The Delaware chief is reluctant to give back the captive. This is a power struggle, or the chief feels that Cora would be mistreated. Magua takes his time in coming to the point, eating with the elders and passing out the gifts. He is taking pains to stay in his "just a friendly neighbor" persona.

The oblique approach does not get Magua what he wants. He tries another tactic, claiming the strangers are spies. This merely makes him look foolish, as the Delaware know the girls had been taken in battle. Finally, Magua brings out the big guns by mentioning the French name of Hawkeye. Now, things are moving.

Chapter 29

Chapter 29 Summary

Cora and Alice stand with their arms around each other. Heyward and Hawkeye stand near. When the chief asks for La Carabine, the reply is "Give us arms...our deeds will speak for us." Eyes look to Heyward, and then Hawkeye speaks up. The chief asks Magua to point to Hawkeye. Heyward calls Magua a liar. Guns are given to both men.

Heyward shoots first at the target, a clay pot on a stump. He comes close. Hawkeye stands as if lost in thought. When asked if he could beat it, Hawkeye drops the weapon into his left hand as the rifle discharges and lets the rifle fall. The pot shatters. The crowd calls it luck and demands another trial. This time the target is a water pot hanging on a tree. Heyward again comes close. Hawkeye shoots and the bullet goes through the mouth of the vessel and out the bottom. He has proved his name.

Magua uses his powers of oratory to talk of tradition and the ways of the world. The elder Tamenund declares that Magua may take what is his and leave. Hawkeye's arms are bound and Magua takes Alice. He expects that Cora will follow, but she throws herself at the feet of Tamenund. She pleads for Alice, saying she will harm none. The old man counters with talk of the land that was his home and is now occupied by pale faces. He does not bend to Cora's plea. Cora tells the chief of the other captive kept from him. The chief asks that he be brought forth.

Chapter 29 Analysis

Heyward may have hoped to disparage the reputation of Magua. Maybe he was stalling for time; Cooper does not tell us. Magua employs his wily tongue to convince the chief of his right to the captives. He speaks of tradition and Indian ways. This works against him as he proves he only has a right to Alice, captured in battle. Magua knows Cora will not let him take Alice alone. Cora also tries to make Magua look dishonest when she mentions Uncas. The Huron planned to torture him to death.

Chapter 30

Chapter 30 Summary

Uncas stands before Tamenund. Tamenund is amazed that a Delaware would be a spy. He condemns Uncas to be tortured and killed. When his shirt is torn from him, a tattoo of a tortoise is seen. Tamenund is happy that the "Uncas, the child of Uncas is found!" Tamenund goes on to speak of the rumor that two Mohicans were still alive. He states that the seat of the chief has been empty too long.

Uncas relaxes a little. He sees Hawkeye in the crowd and frees him. Uncas brings Hawkeye to Tamenund and introduces him as "La Longue Carabine." The elder is not happy that Uncas considers this man a friend. Tales are told that Hawkeye has killed many of his people. Hawkeye counters with the fact that he has killed many Maqua, but no Delaware.

Magua is called forward. He claims to have ownership of all the captives. Tamenund enquires about Uncas. Uncas says that Magua has no claim on any of the captives except for Cora. She does not want to go with Magua. Tamenund states, "an unwilling maiden makes an unhappy wigwam." Magua insists, so Tamenund tells him to take her and go.

Heyward tells Magua that Cora is worth a large ransom. Magua scorns gold and powder. By taking Cora, he is revenged on her father. Hawkeye steps in to bargain. Magua asks Hawkeye to trade with Cora. Hawkeye replies that is not a fair trade. He offers his rifle, Killdeer. When Magua refuses the rifle, Hawkeye then agrees to swap his life for hers. Magua considers the offer, but prefers to take Cora.

Cora asks Hawkeye to take Alice safely home. She says farewell to Heyward and Alice. As Cora readies to go with Magua, Heyward states that he is not bound to the Indian laws that allow Magua to take Cora. Magua laughs and takes Cora away.

Chapter 30 Analysis

Uncas turns out to be the long lost son of Uncas. This raises his status from doomed prisoner to chief in one step. He is able to clear Hawkeye's reputation. Magua had lied about Hawkeye killing Delaware.

It is not clear why Uncas says Cora is Magua's rightful prize. It was Alice that he carried off. The Delaware chief warns Magua that an unhappy wife makes an unhappy home. Magua finally has his prize in hand and refuses all other offers of ransom or trade. Perhaps he has always desired Cora.

Chapter 31

Chapter 31 Summary

The Delaware all watch until Cora can no longer be seen. Then the village erupts into a hive of activity. The woman and children are dispersed and the warriors go to the lodge. Later, the warriors leave the lodge and strip the bark from a pine tree. One paints the tree in a hostile design of red. Uncas appears, clad only in belt and leggings. His face is painted half-black.

Uncas sings and dances around the tree. He is joined by the chiefs and other important warriors. Uncas finishes the dance by driving his tomahawk into the tree. This is the signal for the young warriors to attack the tree as an enemy, splintering it to the ground. Thus, war is declared. Uncas watches the sky. The truce with Magua is over at sunset.

Heyward and Hawkeye plan to be a part of the war party. Hawkeye sends a boy to retrieve the hidden rifles. He knows there will likely be spies in the forest and figures the boy would not be considered a threat worthy of notice. As the boy returns to the village, he is shot at twice, wounding his arm. He gives the rifles to Hawkeye, and goes away to boast of his battle wound.

A party is sent out of the village to dislodge the lurkers in the woods. The lurkers have already left, as they had revealed themselves. Uncas divides the man under several chiefs and Hawkeye. Heyward refuses a command, preferring to go with Hawkeye. Then Uncas and over two hundred men walk into the forest. They stop to confer, expecting an ambush.

A person comes towards them from the side of the enemy. He stops before reaching the group and stands. Hawkeye raises his rifle to shoot, but recognizes David's pitch pipe in the belt. David is brought into the camp. He tells them that Cora is in the cave and that a large number of Huron are ready for war. They are hidden in the forest. Uncas dispatches his men to various positions and missions. The group led by Hawkeye will get Cora while the rest provide cover.

Chapter 31 Analysis

Cooper gives us a dramatic picture of the preparation for war. The dancing and chanting drives up the energy and pulls all the men into a group mentality. They are no longer individuals, but a whole being of many parts, all focused on the same goal. It would be interesting to see how Hawkeye chose the boy to go after his rifle.

Uncas shows great insight and leadership by dividing his troops wisely and anticipating attacks.

Chapter 32

Chapter 32 Summary

Hawkeye finds that David has followed his group. Hawkeye tell David of their dangerous mission and wants to send him back. David pulls a sling out and says he can use it. Hawkeye reluctantly agrees to let David come. Hawkeye and his band engage the enemy along the river. They are almost overrun when Uncas moves forward. The Huron had anticipated the river and left only a small band in the forest. Uncas pushes forward and the Huron are flanked front and back. They fall back to the village. Heyward meets Munro and fills him in again. There is a joyful meeting between Mohican father and son.

The battle is still on, and Magua is seen on a rock prominence. Uncas chases Magua with the four white men close behind. Magua retreats to the cave. The men see a flash of a white robe and shout encouragement to Cora. Magua and two others grab Cora and drag her along. The other group is beginning to catch up.

Suddenly, near a cliff, Cora stops and declares, "Kill me if thou wilt, detestable Huron I will go no farther." The two holding Cora raise their tomahawks. Magua stops them and pulls his knife. He tells Cora to choose between his wigwam and his knife. Cora drops to her knees and prays. Magua raises the knife but drops his arm.

Uncas appears on the hill above them. When Magua is distracted, one of the Indians stabs Cora. Magua lunges toward the murderer, but Uncas kills him. Magua kills Uncas. Magua tries to get away, but Hawkeye kills him.

Chapter 32 Analysis

David is a liability to the undercover group. He has already proven that he is unaware of the true danger he has passed through. It is unknown if Cora understood that the fighting was to rescue her. Maybe she was simply tired of being a pawn dragged into vengeful reprisal. In the end, Magua cannot kill her. There must be some love for her. This is validated when Magua tries to kill the man that stabs Cora.

Chapter 33

Chapter 33 Summary

The story ends with two funerals-one for Cora and one for Uncas. The tribe dresses Cora in fine robes and throws flowers over her body. Uncas is dressed as a chief with all the finery the nation can bestow. Words are spoken over both. The girls of the tribe bury Cora according to her father's wishes. David sings sacred songs over the grave. Uncas is buried in a temporary grave. His bones will be collected later to stay with his tribe. Chingachgook speaks briefly over his son. He declares he is alone now. Hawkeye takes his hand and tells him he will never be alone.

Chapter 33 Analysis

The reader is left with a picture of honor for the dead. It is kind of the women to honor Cora as one of their own. The courage she showed would gain her respect in the tribe. The last picture is that of the last Mohican's grave. The nation is no more. Chingachgook stands alone. Hawkeye, as a true friend, reminds Chingachgook that he will never be alone.

Characters

Big Serpent

See Chingachgook

Bounding Elk

See Uncas

Nathaniel Bumppo

Natty Bumppo is the hero of *The Last of the Mohicans.* Also known as Leatherstocking, the Deerslayer, and the Pathfinder in the other four books of the Leatherstocking tales, Natty Bumppo is known throughout this novel as Hawkeye. Hawk-eye acts as guide and protector, rescuing half-sisters Cora and Alice Munro from Magua and his band of Huron Indians twice, and leading Major Heyward and Colonel Munro on several occasions. In the end, he shoots and kills Magua, who had killed Uncas, son of Chingachgook This cements the bond of Hawkeye and Chingachgook's friendship, and at the end they wander off together.

Hawkeye is the archetype of the American frontier hero Scout, tracker, marksman, he embodies the spirit of the West□the capable man. Hawkeye is in his thirties, at the peak of his physical powers. Civilized, mannered, and garrulous, he can at times be humorous and long-winded, or give over to boasts and superstition. He is a man of dual natures, however, and can be as stoic and silent as his Indian companion, Chingachgook. Although a somewhat idealized character, Hawkeye is not without his flaws. He is always quick to point out his "blood without a cross," making sure that none mistake him for an Indian or even someone of mixed heritage. He is also prejudiced□quick to pass judgment on the Indians of the tribes other than the one with which he is allied.

Natty Bumppo

See Nathaniel Bumppo

Le Cerf Agile

See Uncas

Chingachgook

A middle-aged Mohican Indian and father of Uncas, Chingachgook is the longtime companion of Hawkeye. Last chief of his near vanished tribe, he is by the end of the book the title character, after Uncas perishes at the hand of Magua. Chingachgook speaks only when necessary, and then mostly to Uncas or Hawkeye, and almost always in his native tongue. He has not adapted at all to white ways, despite his long association with Hawkeye. In fact, he kills and scalps a French sentry after the party has been allowed to pass, merely because he is a representative of the enemy. Chingachgook is, however, always forthright and consistent in his dealings with the whites with whom Hawkeye throws in his lot.

David Gamut

David Gamut is a religious singing teacher, or psalmist, of New England. Odd-looking and rather clumsy, he serves no purpose in the world of Hawk-eye, since as he cannot shoot, or make maps, or travel great distances. His singing does, however, make Hawkeye cry. It later serves to save his own life when in the midst of an Indian massacre he begins singing, and the marauding Hurons think him insane.

A thoroughly ineffective man, Gamut takes no part in battles, and when the Munro sisters are abducted by Magua, he merely follows them, doing nothing to hinder the kidnapping. He acts as a reinforcement of the idea that the world of civilization is powerless in the wilderness. Like the cowardice of General Webb, Gamut cannot or will not do anything to stop the actions of his own enemies. He also serves to symbolize the civilized side of spirituality in contrast to Hawkeye's more pagan view. The conflict between Gamut and Hawkeye represents the Lord, the church, and holy books versus the raw fact of nature.

Le Gros Serpent

See Chingachgook

Hawkeye

See Nathaniel Bumppo

Duncan Heyward

An English soldier. Major Heyward is initially the protector of the Munro sisters. Courageous, handsome, and gallant, he appears at first to be the hero, but rapidly loses the role to Hawkeye, the only white man competent in the ways of the uncivilized world in which he finds himself. A symbol of the overly confident outsider, Heyward trusts

Magua to lead him and the two women to safety, thus causing the abduction and subsequent problems. Although armed and nominally a soldier, Heyward finds himself largely useless. He falls in love with Alice, the younger, more civilized and. importantly, most pure-blooded and white of the two Munro sisters. Eventually, he breaks from his role of conventionality, disguising himself as Hawkeye to get into the Huron camp and attempt to effect the release of the captive women. In the end. he returns to the civilized world in which he has a place.

Major Heyward

See Duncan Heyward

Le Longue Carabine

See Nathaniel Bumppo

Magua

Magua, the antagonist of the novel, first appears as a simple guide, but is soon revealed to be the chief of the Huron Indians. A former soldier in Munro's army, his taste for whisky causes him to be punished by a brutal horsewhipping. This loss of dignity sets him on the path of vengeance, and he tries several times to kill the daughters of Colonel Munro.

Magua has been tainted by his service to the whites, and he has lost some of his Indian character. Besides the scars he bears on his back, like a common soldier or slave, his consumption of alcohol has caused him to walk spread-legged, unlike other Indians, and this makes him easy to track. This fact is pointed out by both the "true" Indians, Uncas and Chingachgook, and even Hawkeye.

Although initially making clear his desire to kill the Munro sisters, at several points he makes an offer of marriage to Cora. For whatever reason, Magua cannot go through with the murders of the two, and eventually tries to use his abduction of Alice to convince Cora to enter into a willing union with him. Later, he even looks to Tamenund to grant him express permission to take her away. This betrays his deeper feelings for the girl, as he could simply have spirited her away again. Rather than killing her, Magua wants Cora to desire him, and seeks either her approval, however coerced, or the approval of an authority figure.

Magua is the most complex of the Indian characters in the book. Not motivated by greed, military duty, or simply doing what is right, he seeks vengeance for himself. Allying himself first with the English, and later with the French, Magua has no true loyalty to either. Instead, he serves his own need for vengeance. He regains his place in the Huron tribe, which had previously shunned him, by leading them into battle to collect scalps and booty. This is incidental to him, and like all of his actions, is simply the

means to an end. Magua appears to be the savage reflection of the noble Indian portrayed by Uncas. Similarly graceful, strong, and handsome, he is treacherous rather than noble, and driven by vengeance rather than love or fellowship.

The Marquis of Montcalm

Montcalm is the leader of the French army that besieges Fort Henry. He is a cunning, selfish man. He insists on speaking French with Major Hey ward during their surrender negotiations, yet understands every word of their English conversation. Montcalm is devious, he grants generous terms of surrender to Munro and his men, only to allow the Huron Indians to sweep down and slaughter them once they are out of the safety of the fort. Montcalm illustrates the less noble side of white behavior, acting as an opposite to the actions of Colonel Munro.

Alice Munro

Alice is the archetypal damsel-in-distress of adventure fiction. The younger half-sister of Cora, she is by far the more conventionally feminine of the two. She faints under stress, speaks only when spoken to, and only follows the actions of others, especially her sister Major Heyward, the civilized suitor to Uncas1 s primitive, falls in love with her. Despite her inability to act for herself or offer any attempt at self-preservation, she is the one who lives in the end, while her more forthright sister is killed.

Colonel Munro

Colonel Munro is the father of Cora and Alice Munro, and the commander of Fort Henry. A Scotsman, Munro is no stranger to serving his military posts m strange lands, having met and married Cora's mother in the West Indies. Betrayed by his superior, General Webb, and bereft of his murdered daughter Cora, Colonel Munro finds himself defeated by the forces of both Old World and New in the end.

Cora Munro

Cora is the older of the two daughters of Munro. Dark-haired and bolder than her sister, Cora is of mixed racial heritage Her mother is descended from slaves of the West Indies, her father is Scottish. With her mixed blood, Cooper allows her a more forthright, less feminine nature and greater freedom of action. When her sister, Alice, is abducted by Magua after fainting, she goes along, pursued by the hapless and useless David Gamut, to see that she does not meet her fate alone. Later, Uncas falls in love with her. After he dies at the hand of Magua, Cora is herself killed.

Nimble Deer

See Uncas

Nimble Stag

See Uncas

Le Renard Subtil

See Magua

Tamenund

Tamenund, chief of the Delaware, grants Magua the right to have Cora Munro as a wife. Based on a real man, Tamenund is the only Indian introduced within the context of his own people. He speaks prophetically of the eventual downfall of his people and the other Indians at the hand of the white men in their inevitable push West.

Uncas

At the outset of the book, Uncas, the son of Chingachgook, is the title character, the last of the Mohicans. He falls in love with Cora, the older and far less "civilized" of the Munro girls. In attempting her rescue from Magua, chief of the Hurons, who intends to marry her, Uncas is killed, thus leaving his father as the last of the Mohicans. At his death, the tnbe dies with him; he is the only son of the last chief.

Uncas is an idealized portrait of the Indian, strong, graceful, beautiful. Although initially he seems to be merely along with the party because of his father, his actions eventually become his own, rather than simply following the lead of both his father and Hawkeye. Uncas is also set up as the foil for two of the other characters in the book. He provides the wild, untamed suitor to the Munro sisters in contrast to Major Heyward's civilized being. He is also the noble, handsome, and perfect Indian to Magua's treacherous, scarred, and evil savage.

General Webb

General Webb is the cowardly commanding officer of Colonel Munro, and makes the decision of surrender that sends the inhabitants of Fort George to their deaths. He is characterized by his absence. He does not appear in the text, but rather is spoken of and makes decisions outside of the narrative. Unsure of how to use his command, or what the dangers and strengths of it are, he prefers instead to not act. His inaction causes the fatal events of the last part of the book. He gives up Fort Henry to the

French without a skirmish, causing the deaths of the people who had lived within it. This in turn results in the recapture of the Munro sisters, and ultimately in the deaths of both Cora Munro and Uncas.

Themes

Heredity

A recurring theme of *The Last of the Mohicans* is that of personal lineage and its inescapable effects. The idea of lineage is illustrated in several ways, most obviously in the hereditary title of chief that is passed from father to son. This is most direct in the case of Chingachgook, a chief and a Mohican, who passes that lineage to Uncas, the titular last Mohican who will become the last chief, or sagamore, upon his father's death. "When Uncas follows in my footsteps, there will no longer be any of the blood of the sagamores, for my boy is the last of the Mohicans." It is also clear in Hawkeye's repeated insistence that he is "a man without a cross." He obsessively points out that his "white" blood makes him purebred and civilized, despite his time among the Indians. Magua, too, is inheritor of the title of chief from his own people. Cora's forthright and passionate nature is due to her "uncivilized" lineage, as her mother was descended from native peoples of the West Indies Her sister, of white stock, is retiring and calm.

Cutural Destruction

Though *The Last of the Mohicans* is clearly an abduction narrative or historical novel, it can also be read as a long essay about the destruction of cultures. Most obviously, the death of the Mohican tribe, embodied by the murder of Uncas, last son of the last chief, acts as a microcosm of the programmatic destruction of Native American culture. It is also shown through the degradation of Magua's character. He too is a chief, and his heritage has been tainted not by murder but by his interaction with whites□both English and French□and the evils of their culture, especially whisky. It is this sin, drinking the "firewater" of the white man, that leads to his savagery, treachery, and ultimate death. Subtler still is the symbolism of Cora's mother, a woman of West Indian slave origin In her story, and in the genetic legacy she passes to her daughter, the novel recalls the earlier destruction of native culture in the first conquests of the whites. At the same time, the destruction of culture is effected through "miscegenation"□both metaphorically and literally. Just as West Indian culture has been destroyed, so intermarriage has destroyed the individuality of Cora's racial heritage.

The metaphonc role of interracial relationships is reinforced in Uncas' s story His love for a woman of white extraction leads to his death, just as his involvement with white politics leads to his moral decay. In much the same way, each character in *The Last of the Mohicans* experiences the dangers of mixing and losing one's place in one's culture. The Hurons have destroyed themselves by allying with the French, and becoming actively involved in the white man's destruction of both their way of life and their culture. Even Chingachgook has partnered himself with a white, both because there are no others of his tribe and because no other tribes are trustworthy. The "purity" of Indian Nation loyalties are no longer clear because they have begun to choose sides and align themselves with one white nation or the other, precipitating their own destruction.

Chingachgook's fate is sealed as soon as he chooses Hawkeye as a companion Though Hawkeye is a solitary white man, not "white culture," and although he appears more or less uninterested in the conflicts and conquests of the invaders, Chingachgook has nonetheless left his own world and culture. In the end, Tamenund is the only chief who still remains with his own tribe, and he foresees the death of Native American ways of life. As he says, "The pale faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the redmen has not come again My day has been too long.... I have lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans."

Opposing Forces

Cooper makes wide and varied uses of opposites as a major theme. These range from the obvious□French versus English armies, and Indians against whites□to subtler, character-based oppositions. Of the characters, Hawkeye is a man of the woods, a native in his own environment, and he is revealed through his juxtaposition with a variety of "civilized" and "rude" men. Major Heyward is a soldier who cannot fight in the ways in which he needs in order to survive in Hawkeye's world. Uniformed and educated in the arts of war, Heyward can do nothing except follow Hawkeye's lead in all things once he is outside the confines of the fort. Removed from the world he knows, Heyward is useless. David Gamut, the psalmist, represents an ordered and civilized spirituality in contrast to Hawkeye's natural, pagan world. Chingachgook is the other side of Hawkeye's wilderness existence. Where Hawkeye is careful and reserved, his Mohican companion is rash, killing nominal enemies who offer no threat, and wishing to rush into conflict without consideration. Hawkeye is always quick to point out that though he has spent thirty years in the woods and living among the Indians, he has no Indian blood in his veins. For Chingachgook, it is just the opposite. He is to be perceived for what he is, an Indian.

Uncas, too, is used as a foil for multiple characters. Most obviously, he stands in contrast with Magua. Where Uncas is handsome, strong, and unmarked, Magua is savage-looking, devious, and bears the scars and marks of battles and his own foolishness. Uncas lives in the wilderness, with his father and Hawkeye. Magua has been cast out from his people, and serves first the English and then the French army, and later returns to his tribe. Though both are to be chiefs of their respective nations, Uncas does not have a nation to rule, and Magua's has cast him out. In the simplest terms, Cooper has set Uncas up as the ideal, noble Indian, and made Magua the crafty, vicious savage. Uncas and Major Hey ward are used as opposites, both filling roles as potential suitors for the Munro sisters. Uncas is silent, classically beautiful, as the girls remark, and makes his love for Cora known through his actions, including his eventual death. He also acts as a contrast with Major Heyward, who loves Alice. Hey-ward, handsome as well but not classically so, is a talkative man of words and little action, who neither fights for nor gives his life for Alice. He becomes a part of her rescue by following the party, following the instructions of Hawkeye, and by simply being in the right place at the right time.

Style

Point of View

The Last of the Mohicans is told from a third person limited point of view. The narration of the story explains the events and actions of the novel, but does not give insight into the characters' thoughts or motivations. The only way to gain this information is by interpreting what the *dramatis personae* do and say. This perspective is further limited by the centrality of Hawkeye to the narrative. With very few exceptions, Cooper limits the scope of the narration to events that directly involve Hawkeye.

At the beginning of the story, the narration and point of view follow first David Gamut, then the Munro sisters and Major Heyward. Cooper shifts the story to introduce Hawkeye, Chingachgook, and Uncas, only to lead them to the party consisting of Heyward, the Munro sisters, Gamut, and Magua. From that point, there is a minimum of interruptions of the point of view directly involving Hawkeye.

The point of view shifts to the Munro sisters and Heyward when they are captured by the Huron Indians, and follows them until they are to be killed by then- captors. Once Hawkeye and the Mohicans effect their rescue, the narrative once again follows them, until the capitulation of Fort Henry to the French. At that point, during the ensuing battle between the Hurons and the English, Cooper once again focuses on the Munro sisters and Gamut as they are led away by Magua. The story then moves to Hawkeye, Colonel Munro, and Heyward as they follow the sisters and their abductor. There are only a few shifts of scene to keep the reader informed as to their fate, while Cooper mostly gives the story over to the events and actions of Hawkeye and his party.

The Historical Romance

Set in the third year of the French and Indian War, *The Last ofthe Mohicans* is a historical novel, but does not attempt to provide a straight telling of any recorded events of the time. Cooper, like one of the other popular authors of his day, Sir Walter Scott, lends more importance to the narrative than to the historical context in which it is set. The book is not entirely fictional, however. He makes reference to the massacre of Fort William Henry, and some of the characters of the novel are based at least in part on actual figures: Colonel Munro, of the English army, and the Marquis de Montcalm, of the French. The names of the Indian tribes, the Delaware, Huron, and Mohawk, are of course factual, and "Mohican" is a corruption of "Mohegan."

There are some deviations from the facts. Despite the title and events of the book, there were members of the Mohican tribe still extant in the area when Cooper wrote his novel. In fact, the Mohicans, or Mohegans, as they are now more commonly known, were not wiped out by the French and Indian War. Members of the tribe still exist today, and are still living in the upper New York State area. The novel is set within the area in which

Cooper himself lived. By the time it was written, the rural areas of New York State were no longer the wild forests of Cooper's novel, and the frontier had long ago moved West. Basing his story in the area around him, Cooper was able to draw on the memories and histories local to himself.

The historical romance was one of the two largest selling and most popular genres of fiction of the day. After taking the English drawing-room comedy for the model of his first novel, Cooper turned to the other form, where he found success. Duplicating the work of Scott down to estimated word length, he adapted an already accepted form of writing to the American narrative, and set down for posterity the tales and legendary characters of his own nation. This allowed him use of archaic language, a major component of the historical romance, as well as a certain suspension of disbelief. Only in the world of historical romance could two maidens be abducted multiple times, affording the author many chances to describe the heroism of Hawkeye and his companions, and to describe, over and over again, the dangers and savagery of those they faced.

Historical Context

The 1760s: The French and Indian War

The French and Indian War, which is the setting of *The Last of the Mohicans,* lasted seven years. Originally, the conflict was between England and France, with various tribes supporting both sides. The failure of the English to use their allies in an effective manner, and their poor treatment of those who did assist them, led most to leave, either not taking part or going over to the side of the French. While the Cherokee originally sided with the English, they soon joined the Delaware, Miami, Potawaiomi, Chippewa, Micmac. Abenaki, Ottawa, Shawnee, and Wyandots on the side of the French. The forces of France had much more in the way of Indian support from the outset, as the French were much less numerous than the English, and were perceived as less of a threat to themselves and their territories.

The Indians viewed the French in this way because the French had, for the most part, inserted themselves into existing standards of intertribal diplomacy. The English were rude by comparison. The French were also much more content to let their allies act as autonomous forces, arming them and letting them go and choose their own targets and battles. The English merely tried to conscript them into their armies. Many, like Magua in *The Last of the Mohicans,* did not adapt well, either to the strange and strict ways of their military leaders, or to the problems inherent in liquor.

At the outset of the war, the importance of the Native Americans as allies was minimal. That changed in 1759, when the Iroquois Confederacy joined the forces of England in the attack on Fort Niagara, an important French base. Their numbers swelled by the Iroquois, the English army eventually waited out the French, who had no means of getting supplies, reinforcements, or food. The Iroquois were widely believed to have been the decisive factor, and the battle was an important one in the fight to drive the French away.

By allying themselves with the English and driving the French away, the Iroquois Nation hoped to gain more in the way of considerations for their autonomy and lands. Also, by forming the Iroquois Nation of many differing tribes, they were attempting to marshal a force great enough to eventually drive all foreigners from their lands. Neither goal was achieved, since the English gave them nothing in the way of treaties or equality and the Iroquois Nation itself fell to infighting and separation of its constituent tribes.

The 1820s: National Indian Policy and the Birth of American Literature

The 1820s were an age of great transition for the United States. Just eight years before, the United States had defeated the British in the War of 1812. At the beginning of the decade, the American South became the world's largest producer of cotton This in turn

spurred the growth of the industrial economy in the northern states, as more and larger textile mills were built to use the raw material. In 1821, the United States wrested Florida from the Spanish and defeated the Native tribes of the state at the same time.

The success of the U.S. military in its territorial conquests and war victories was matched by the high rate of economic growth in the country as a whole. However, America had no reputation whatsoever for its artistic or cultural output among the older, more established nations of Europe. The folkways and people of America were unique, a greater mix than any before in the world. But there was nothing that was looked on as a lasting, permanent monument to the nation for the rest of the world to take part in until *The Last of the Mohicans.*

Cooper produced *The Last of the Mohicans* as an apparent tribute to the vanishing cultures of the Native Americans. At the time of the publication of Cooper's book in 1826, the U.S. government had been pushing the Indians further West with greater speed and force than at any time before In 1824, the Indian problem had come to a head in President James Monroe's State of the Union address. He declared that the only solution to the "Indian problem" was their removal to lands further west, far from the white settlers.

Immediately after the publication of the address in national newspapers, Cooper began work on *The Last of the Mohicans.* This work, conceived both in tribute to and as apology to the American Indian, was the first American fiction to be accepted an Europe as a significant and serious novel. While the policy of the U S. government and the actions of its army worked to move the Indians west, destroying their way of life and cultural identities, the readers of the world came to know them "as they were." Cooper produced a novel that set the public's perception of the American Indian for years to come, but the irony was that he wrote it even as their way of life was being destroyed forever. The greater irony is that rather than approach the culture and problems of the Indians of his day, Cooper chose instead to concentrate on a past that was already gone.

Critical Overview

Initial Responses

The critical response to Cooper's *The Last of the Mohicans* was overwhelmingly positive An American work of fiction was at last praised on both sides of the Atlantic for its realism, adventure, and characters. The editor of *Escritor* called Cooper "a genuine talent who has successfully bound realism in the guise of romance." The *Literary Gazette* praised his "ability to maintain interest and paint vivid characters and scenery," while *Literary World* referred to his "real life scenery created with faithfully presented narrative." *New York Review and Atheneum Magazine* described Cooper as "an imaginative writer," exhibiting "extraordinary power." The *Liverpool Repository* stated that Cooper was superior to Sir Walter Scott as an imparter of information.

Cooper's characters excited reviewers, but there was no consensus as to which were the best. His portraits of Indian life were praised by the *Literary Chronicle and Weekly Review* and *Monthly Review. Panaromic Miscellany* went so far as to call it "the most vivid and truthful portrait of Indians that has yet been written." *New York Review and Atheneum Magazine* claimed that Cora and Alice Munro were "delightful creations." Some critics and reviewers tempered their praise with criticism. *The Monthly Review* stated that while "Cooper has woven a tale of incredible suspense," it "need not have culminated in the tragedy that it did." The *United States Literary Gazette* said, "while *The Last of the Mohicans* is superior of those of a similar type that have preceded it" the book is "capable of improvement." The writer went on to criticize the plot as "simple" with "little variety " *The New York Review and Atheneum Magazine* said that "if the author fails at all, it is in his ability to keep his characters' motive consistent with their actions."

Some condemned the novel entirely. W. H. Gardiner, writing in *The North American Review,* said that "Cooper goes out of way to put his characters into impossible situations that do nothing for the plot except clutter it with far too much action." One reviewer, in *United States Review and Literary Gazette,* attacked the author's research. Instead of faulting Cooper's acknowledged sources, however, he blamed Cooper for using the "absurdities and improbabilities" of Heckewelder's *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs, of the Indian Nations, Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States,* John Neal, writing for the *London Magazine,* referred to *The Last of the Mohicans* as "the Last American Novel," condemning it as "the worst of Cooper's novels□tedious, improbable, unimaginative and redundant." In fact, Cooper's novel was so well known that two of his contemporaries published parodies of him: William Makepeace Thackeray's "The Stars and Stripes" in *Punch* (October 9, 1847), and Bret Hart's *Muck-a-Muck: A Modern Indian Novel after Cooper.*

A Reputation in Decline

Cooper's literary reputation seemed untouchable, but had declined even before his death in 1851. Thomas Lounsbury savaged both the man and his work, and Cooper's critical demise was assured and hastened by Mark Twain's "Fenimore Cooper's Literary Offenses," published in the July 1895 *American Review.* By the turn of the century, *The Last of the Mohicans* had become nothing more than a boy's adventure story The criticism continued in the twentieth century. James Holden chronicled a list of Cooper's historical inaccuracies in his 1917 book, *'The Last of the Mohicans': Cooper's Historical Inventions, and His Cave.* John A. Inglis, of the *Society of Antiquaries of Scotland,* took Cooper to task for his use of Colonel Munro, noting that with the exception of his nationality, Cooper got nothing about the historical figure correct, even misspelling his name as "Munro" instead of the correct "Monro "

Detractors were going to extraordinary lengths to attack Cooper, and he had few defenders□most notably William Brownell, Brander Matthews, and William Phelps. However, their work was far more biographical in nature than scholarly, and did little to repair the damage of their colleagues. There were also a few tongue-in-cheek critiques of the novel, most notably John V. A. Weaver's "Fenimore Cooper□Comic," published in *Bookman.* Weaver argued that "Cooper could not have written such an incredibly bad book and been serious about it." He suggested that Cooper was in fact trying to create the "great comic novel of the nineteenth century."

T. A. Birrell's 1980 preface to Cooper's *Last of the Mohicans* claimed that the author had created a new literary form: "dramatic poetry as fiction." James Fenimore Cooper has once again been raised to his place as first man of American letters. His lapses in style, broad and underdeveloped characters, and convoluted, unrealistic plots are forgiven in the new view of Cooper as the father of the American novel.

A New Appreciation

After World War I, there was a sudden rebirth in the popularity and critical estimation of Cooper's work. In *Fenimore Cooper: Critic of His Times,* Robert E. Spiller sought to prove that Cooper was a profound social critic and serious author, refuting the perception of Cooper as an author of adventure stories. Suddenly, a vast cross section of authors and critics were reexamining *The Last of the Mohicans.* No longer taken at face value, it was reinterpreted in a variety of ways and used to illustrate the social ideals inherent in the work. In *Studies in American Fiction,* Dennis W. Allen pointed out the semiotic differences in the viewpoints of the white and Indian characters. Frank Bergmann explored the racial tolerance of the book, but also touched on Cooper's apparent reluctance to make solid statements about race. In *New Left Review,* George Dekker claimed that "miscegenation ... provided the vehicle by which Cooper was able to investigate the more general problem of race relations." Terence Martin suggested in *The Frontier in History and Literature: Essays and Interpretations* that Cooper had trouble fitting a civilized man into the wilderness, or a wild man into civilization, and turned to the racial themes to inquire into the nature of the frontier.

There were also those who sought to defend Cooper's facts, style, and characters. Explaining away Cooper's tendency to play fast and loose with facts, Daniel J. Sundahl said in *Rackham Journal of the Arts and Humanities* that the book "is flawed in historical detail, for Cooper sacrificed fact for literary effect." He went on to suggest that the development of Hawkeye as a well-rounded character actually harms the book. "To assume that Cooper indulged in prolonged study is fallacious," stated *American Literature* contributor Thomas Philbrick, in an attempt to diffuse the belief that Cooper mixed up facts and chronology. Philbrick claimed that while the author did use reference works for his writing, he was by no means devoted to them.

Criticism

- Critical Essay #1
- Critical Essay #2
- Critical Essay #3

Critical Essay #1

Mclntosh-Byrd is a doctoral candidate and English literature instructor at the University of Pennsylvania. In the following essay, she critiques the role of mediation in the construction of romance, race, and national identity in The Last of the Mohicans.

The Last of the Mohicans is centered on Hawkeye, the figure of the pioneer and pathfinder who provides the link through which wilderness and civilization can be mediated. Throughout Cooper's novel, both Hawkeye and the reader are presented with a series of oppositions based on culture, race, and geography that create seemingly irreconcilable tensions and paradoxes. Indeed, the text itself is driven by an overarching narrative and generic paradox□the uneasy reconciliation of fact with fiction, history with romance.

Cooper's blend of fact and fiction has been extensively analyzed. Set in the third year of the French and Indian War, *The Last of the Mohicans* elides the boundaries that separate history and literature in order to create a quasi-mythic narrative of American history within which the New Man can be understood Hawkeye, the archetypal American, straddles the fiction/fact divide, linking the actual events and persons of the period to the demands of Cooper's genre. Colonel Munro, the Marquis de Montcalm, the Indian nations, and the Fort William Henry massacre all find their basis in fact, though all are significantly altered by their incarnations in a romance

The traditional narrative model of the romance is a quest, and its traditional textual movement tracks the protagonist as she or he enters unknown territories and worlds that transcend normal existence. This model also serves as the basis of the historical romance, Cooper's chosen genre, which is normally structured by the movement between hostile civilizations, worlds, or stages of cultural development. In so doing, the form allows narrative articulation of cultural self-analysis and awareness. By allowing the "Self culture to come into conflict with its "Other," the central features of the former are thrown into relief. la the American versions of the genre, this definitional clash of cultures gains intense significance. By endlessly enacting and reenacting the distinctions between New American and Native American cultures, historical romances act as a pnmary tool of self-definition for a young country that finds itself in need of a stable self-identity. In *The Last of the Mohicans* this series of clashes takes place between multiple "Selves" and "Others," and serves several purposes. Hawkeye, as the hero of the romance quest, travels between the Old and New Worlds and is in permanent contrast with both. Moving uneasily between his affiliations with the "natural" Delaware and the "pure-blooded" Europeans, Hawkeye creates a version of American identity that challenges the old order while retaining many of its key myths of lineage and purity.

Cooper's novel is most easily understood through an analysis of these kinds of oppositions The narrative gains its momentum from the juxtaposition of such opposed elements as French and English, Indian and white, and from more particularized juxtapositions of characters and types. The complexity of the novel's structure is

suggested by the density of such contrasts, which not only provide comparisons between the Old and New Worlds, but also refract those worlds in upon themselves, removing the possibility of simplistic assessments Uncas and Magua, both chiefs without a tribe, stand in contrast to each other and with the contrasted Europeans, provoking a more complex negotiation of cultures than is at first apparent. Where Uncas is handsome, strong, and unmarked, Magua is "a savage" in appearance, painted and scarred by custom, war, and punishment. The level of scarification serves a clear symbolic function. Just as Uncas is a "pure" Indian, untainted by corrupt contact with Europeans, so he is "untouched" in appearance, while Magua's increasing corruption is literally inscribed into his flesh. Uncas in turn mirrors Major Heyward, both of them in love with one of the Munro sisters, but only the former capable of adequately defending them. Moving outwards in the ripple of textual associations, the relationships of Webb/Munro, Munro/de Montcalm, and Hey ward/Gamut provide interior commentary-through-comparison on the European worldview.

Following the generic conventions of the romance, Hawkeye's character is created through an assembled chiaroscuro of contrasts with all of these representatives of various cultures. A "woodsman" and "beaver expert," Hawkeye's dangerous wild-ness is made valorous and valid by what he is *not:* neither a "civilized" nor a "rude" man. Major Heyward, uniformed, chivalrous, and educated in all the arts of war, is literally and figuratively "lost" as soon as he leaves the fort. Where his environment is circumscribed and dangerously finite, Hawkeye's natural medium *is* the environment in its most general sense□the wilderness. David Gamut, the psalmist, epitomizes an ordered and civilized spirituality inflated to a ridiculously hyperbolic level. Physically jarring and unable to assimilate into any of the situations in which the characters find themselves, Gamut becomes representative of the Old World religion against which American culture is defining itself. When he is juxtaposed with Hawkeye, the latter thus takes on a quasi-Jeffersonian naturalism by contrast, one in which harmony with nature and the self is elevated above formal protestation of faith as a signifier of moral virtue.

However, the near paganism of Hawkeye's "natural religion" is carefully distanced from the spirituality of the "Natural men"□the Mohicans. Chingachgook and Uncas, the new American counterparts of Hawkeye's dual cultural alignments, are separated from the hero both by the narrative and the character himself. While Hawkeye's "natural" instincts are in contrast to the formalized useless-ness of both Heyward and Gamut, they are also configured as "rational" or "civilized," when juxtaposed with the behavior of his comrades. Where Hawkeye is careful, reserved, and feared as the dead-shot "Longue Carabine," Uncas is rash, killing nominal enemies who offer no threat and rushing headlong into conflict. Significantly, it is neither a European nor a native, but only Hawk-eye□the man who is of both and neither cultures at the same time□who is compassionate enough to waste his ammunition in putting a dangling enemy out of his misery. As a "man without a cross" who lives with natives but remains insistently white, Hawkeye is allowed to negotiate all possible worlds by remaining either genetically or geographically detached.

What happens if these series of opposed elements blend instead of finding or creating a removed mediation point, as Hawkeye does? Cooper's "romance" gains much of its

thematic momentum from answering this question through the use of "romance"□the metaphoric role of sexual relationships between members of opposed cultures. Significantly, the protagonist is resolutely excluded from this literal "mediation" of cultures, providing a model of "untainted" communication instead. Thus while Hawkeye is, as he insists to a hyperbolic degree, a "man without a cross," many of the other characters are either symbolically or actually "crossbred," and the results are never shown to be positive. Cora's mother is a woman of West Indian slave origins, and though Colonel Munro takes great pride in his daughter's heritage, it is clear that he expects it to retard her progress through life. Cora's "bursting blood" recalls both the destruction of an earlier culture, as well as the cultural erasure signified by assimilation: just as West African culture has been destroyed, so intermarriage has destroyed the individuality of Cora's racial heritages. The result is not decay but vitality, the excessive life that is uneasily demarcated as both positive and negative within the text. Unlike her blonde and feeble sister, Cora is determined and heroic, but the only textual resolution available to her character is death or further "crossbreeding." Only "savages" fall in love with Cora.

The metaphor of interracial blending is reinforced in the story of Cora's lover. Uncas's love for a European woman leads to his death in the same way that his involvement with white affairs leads to his moral decay. On a broader symbolic level, this pattern can be applied to much of the novel's treatment of culture. Chingachgook identifies the "blending" of European and native cultures through the trade of "firewater" as the primary and devastating force of European colonialism. The Hurons are shown in the process of self-destruction through alliance with de Montcalm's forces, which threaten to destroy both their ways of life and their culture. By Magua's own analysis his character is destroyed by his interaction with whites□both English and French□and the evils of their culture, especially whisky. His sexual obsession with Cora, who symbolizes both colonizer and colonized, compounded with his drinking□Chi n-gachgook's Original Sin of colonialism-□leads to his punishment, revenge, and the cycle of treachery that ends in his death. Even Chingachgook, despite his integrity, embraces the dispersal of his culture when he accepts Hawkeye as his "brother." Though Hawkeye is a solitary white man, and a new kind of white man at that, Chingachgook has nonetheless been forced by genocide and cultural self-destruction to leave his own world when he accepts Hawkeye as family. In this new, American idea of family, only Hawkeye has the ability to retransmit his culture to another generation, and their interracial relationship thus signifies death even as it appears to provide narrative hope. As Tamenund says, "1 have lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans."

The core paradox of Cooper's historical romance lies in the uneasy ambiguity of its hero's mediation of these opposed cultures. Both Cooper and his protagonists work from the assumption that the modern stages of historical development are inherently better than the "savagery" of prior stages. At the same time, they also view the present as a dangerous challenge to the communal values and hierarchical relationships of the recent past. Both European and native cultures are shown to be violently disrupted throughout *The Last of the Mohicans,* with established systems of leadership and conduct broken down by alcohol, war, corruption and cultural contamination. Hawkeye, the only man to successfully negotiate these disruptions, is also significantly removed

from the social hierarchy that has reformed itself by the novel's closing pages. The "man without a cross" may be the new American archetype, but he is also its Other□a man who dwells in the borderlands that separate Europe and the natives, with no familial or emotional ties to the people who comprise the power elite of either side.

The end of Cooper's historical romance thus intimates both stability and disruption□an uneasy celebration of both the return of hierarchical order and the heroism of the man who remains outside of that hierarchy. It allows identification with a socially mobile outsider and simultaneously promises that real social mobility will be denied him. In exactly the same way, it validates the possibility of a superior native culture even while it is careful to make that culture an irretrievably dying one. If, as many literary theorists have claimed, the historical romance genre acts as a stabilizing force for the demands of social hierarchy, then the main impulse of *The Last of the Mohicans* is not the articulation and celebration of "natural," or "wild," self-identity, but instead the exact opposite. Hawkeye is both hero and antihero of his own story in a culture that seeks to distance itself from the Old World, even as it tries to retain the social structure that makes that world possible. As a stalemate of conflicting Anglophobic and Anglophiliac impulses, it provides an extremely ambiguous fictional pathway to later American history.

Source: Tabitha Mclntosh-Byrd, in an essay for *Novels for Students,* Gale, 2000.

Critical Essay #2

In the following essay, Levernier examines the changing critical status of The Last of the Mohicans.

For more than a century after its publication in 1826, *The Last of the Mohicans* was by far the most widely read of any of the novels of James Fenimore Cooper. Nonetheless, while praised for its strong narrative interest, *The Last of the Mohicans* was generally disparaged as the least substantive of the Leatherstocking Tales, with *The Prairie, The Pioneers, The Pathfinder,* and *The Deerslayer* receiving far greater critical acclaim. According to its 19th-century critics, *The Last of the Mohicans* satisfied the popular demands of audiences that craved adventure, but it did so at the expense of both content and realism. Particularly objectionable was Cooper's depiction of Indians, whom reviewers found hopelessly romanticized and not at all historical. As one commentator explained, Cooper's Indians "have no living prototype in our forests. They may wear leggins and moccasins, and be wrapped in a blanket or a buffalo skin, but they are civilized men, not Indians." Even Francis Park-man, who found worth in Cooper's mythic dimensions, felt that the Indians of the Leatherstocking Tales were "either superficially or falsely drawn." As a result, *The Last of the Mohicans* was for the most part dismissed as "almost pure adventure with slight social import."

Ironically, only in the 20th century, when the novel began to decline in popularity, did critical distinctions between novels of realism and novels of romance pave the way for scholars to discern in *The Last of the Mohicans* depths that had gone unnoticed for decades. To begin with, scholars attacked the notion that the novel lacked historical veracity. Research into Cooper's sources indicated that although he wrote the book in approximately four months he had researched his materials quite carefully. Among the many historical and anthropological sources attributed to the novel are Alexander Henry's *Travels and Adventures* (1809), Jonathan Carver's *Travels Through the Interior Parts ofNorth-Amenca* (1778), David Humphrey's *Life of Israel Putnam* (1788), Alexander Mackenzie's *Voyages from Montreal* (1802), and *The History ... of Captains Lewis and Clark* (1814).

Additional research further determined that the Indian materials in the novel were derived from a careful reading of such works as John Heck-ewelder's *History, Manners, and Customs of the Indian Nations* (1818) and Cadwallader Colden's *History of the Five Indian Nations* (1727). Literary sources include *The Iliad, The Odyssey,* and *The Aeneid,* as well as *Paradise Lost* and the novels of Scott and Austen. Leatherstocking himself is thought to be based on John Filson's "Adventures of Col. Daniel Boone" (1784), and mistakes in historical accuracy, including the eloquent language of Cooper's Indians, are in general attributable to Cooper's sources, who at the time when they wrote were considered the foremost experts on the subjects they addressed. Even Cooper's landscape portraits, once thought to be hopelessly romantic backdrops to his fiction, came to be seen as complex symbolic structures that provide insight into the metaphysical foundations for a pre-Conradian analysis of the relationship between the wilderness and civilization.

Cooper himself said, however, that in writing *The Last of the Mohicans* he created a novel "essentially Indian in character," and it is in exploring what one analyst described as "the question of the relations between men of different races in the New World" that critics have found in the book a theme of "national, even hemispheric significance." Within this context, Cooper's vision of historical progress is seen as profoundly pessimistic and astutely prophetic. Extended into the wilderness setting of the novel, the rivalries between the French and English for control of the North American continent continue to propagate racial and nationalistic prejudices that the events of the narrative violently display. At the same time, the brutality of the Indians undercuts the romantic myth that in the wilderness of the New World the civilizations of the past will undergo a pastoral revitalization. Of the three characters in the novel capable of offering the possibility for moral renewal through a blending of the virtues of the Old and New Worlds, Cora and Uncas die, and Leatherstocking, described as a "man without a cross"□in other words, someone without preconceived prejudices who is open to the possibility of a new kind of moral order□remains childless and eventually vanishes into the wilderness According to one critic, "In the bloodshed of William Henry the determining power of history is affirmed." People are seen as "incapable of change," and history becomes nothing more than "an endlessly repeating decimal" in which America's future will "necessarily recapitulate the European and the tribal past."

Source: James A. Levermer, *"The Last of the Mohicans* Overview," in *Reference Guide to American Literature, 3rd ed.,* edited by Jim Kamp, St James Press, 1994

Critical Essay #3

In the following excerpt from a review of The Last of the Mohicans, *Miller praises Cooper's depiction of native American life and discusses the plot and characterizations of the novel, finding the characters Uncas, Chingachgook, and Bumppo (here called Hawk-eye) especially well presented.*

[In *The Last of the Mohicans* Cooper has] attempted to offer a picture of Indian character and life, and we may be justified, by a personal acquaintance with the aboriginal tribes of the North-Amencan wilderness which falls to the lot of few Europeans, in pronouncing with confidence that it is a representation of admirable fidelity That the author has availed himself of the narrative of John Hunter and of the notices of the missionary Heck-ewelder, is extremely probable; but we are convinced that the tale could never have been written, with the peculiar graphic truth which marks every page of his delineations of Indian manners, unless he had himself mingled with the red children of his country's forests. Elaborate relations of their general usages, and even mutations of their nervous and figurative language, might be copied from books: but here we have a thousand little peculiarities of habit, gesture, tone, and attitude, thrown as it were incidentally and unconsciously into the narrative, but which could not possibly have been noted except by familiar and watchful observance from the life. We are particular in remarking the easy and perpetual recurrence of these little characteristic touches, because they serve to determine the pretensions of the work to the highest praise which can be bestowed upon it They certify that it is all that it claims to be, an authentic exhibition of the wildest and most fearfully romantic state of society, which the world has ever known.

The structure of the tale itself is sufficiently simple, but the narrative is frequently worked up to an intensity of horror and an agony of suspense which are really much more than interesting: the anxiety of the reader becomes engrossed, and his imagination excited, in many of the situations of the story, to a degree which is absolutely painful. Indeed it is a positive fault in the romance that the personages, for whom our sympathies are keenly awakened, encounter one unrelieved and perpetual crisis of terrific danger through three whole volumes of adventure. They are never for an instant secured from the appalling contingencies of a conflict with the Indian Throughout the entire tale, the lair and ambush are around them and the war-whoop in their ears: the death-shot from the unerring rifle is the least of their dangers; and the tomahawk, the scalping knife, and the demoniac refinements of savage torture, appear as their hourly and impending lot The first volume is filled with the thrilling details of an encounter with the Indians, which should seem to terminate, after a quick succession of imminent perils and as many sudden escapes, in the temporary safety of the rescued victims. These adventures are conceived with vivid invention, and the circumstances are told with amazing animation and force of description. Through this first volume we are led by the author in breathless rapid interest: our attention is never off the stretch; and yet we seek no relief, until we have seen the objects of our sympathy beyond their first series of dangers. But then it is that we encounter the prominent defect of the work. The second volume resembles the first, and the third is a repetition of the second. Without respite, without variety of

interest, and almost without any change of scene, machinery, or action, we are led in an uniformity of horror through two volumes more of Indian ambushes, pursuits, battles, massacres, and scalpings [The characters of Chingachgook, Un-cas, and the white hunter] prove conspicuous actors . and are, beyond all comparison, the most remarkable and best drawn characters m the book. One of them, the white hunter, who is introduced to us only by his *noms de guerre* of Hawk-eye and La Longue Carabine, is a specimen (of the better sort, indeed,) of a class of men still to be found in the American forests His qualities are adroitly elicited by a hundred little characteristic niceties of opinion and action, which, though perhaps they might not be quite understood by our home-bred readers, are all struck off from the original with most admirable tact. In the strange mixture of the habits of civilised and Indian life, the corresponding confusion of moral opinions and principles, an enthusiastic respect for the finer qualities of the red people, coupled always with the superior pride of pure European blood, and the perpetual boast of being 'a man without a cross;' in all these points, he who is familiar with the population of the American forests will at once recognise Hawk-eye for the true exemplar of a whole class. He is the genuine representative of the white hunter, who has naturalised himself among the red people, preserving some of the lingering traits and humaner features of civilised man, but acquiring the stern insensibility to danger and suffering, the patient endurance of privation, the suppleness and activity of limb, and even in part the wonderful sagacity of the senses, by which the native warrior supports and guards his life, and tracks out his path in the darkness, and solitude, and bewildering mazes of his gigantic forests.

The two Indian companions of Hawk-eye are father and son, 'the Last of the Mohicans,' a once celebrated tribe of the Delaware nations. Mr. Cooper will not be accused, by those at least who know any thing of the Indian character, of having, with any undue and foolish partiality for the virtues of savage life, depicted it too favourably for truth. But as in Magua he has displayed all the worst and most revolting features of the Indian mind, so may his portraits of the two Mohicans, Chingachgook and Uncas, be received as accurately representing in their persons all that is dignified and estimable, and the amount of this is far from small, in the simple children of the lake and forest.

Source: John Miller, in a review of *The Last of the Mohicans,* in *The Monthly Review,* London, Vol. H, No. VII, June, 1826, pp. 122-31.

Adaptations

The Last of the Mohicans was most recently adapted to film in 1992. This version, directed by Michael Mann, starred Daniel Day Lewis, Madeleine Stowe, and Russell Means. A Morgan Creek production, this film is available on home video and DVD.

In 1977, the book was adapted for a made-for-TV movie, directed by James Conway, and featuring Steve Forrest, Michele Marsh, and Ned Romero.

In 1957, there was a TV series based on the characters from the book, and bearing its title. It starred Lon Chaney Jr. as Chingachgook.

Two film adaptations of the book were made in the 1930s. Ford Beebe's 1932 version, starring Harry Carey, Edwina Booth, and Hobart Bosworth; and George B. Seitz's 1936 version, starring Randolph Scott, the aptly named Alice Munro, and Robert Barrat.

There were also two silent films based on the novel. In 1911, director Theodore Marston's production starred Frank Hall Crane, and, in 1920, Clarence Brown directed Harry Lorraine, Barbara Bedford, and Theodore Lurch in the film.

Several foreign film versions of the book have been made. The BBC produced a TV version in 1971. Directed by David Maloney, it starred Kenneth Ives, Patricia Maynard, and John Al-bineri. There were two European attempts at adapting the book to film in 1965 From Spain, there was Mateo Cano's version, starring Jose Marco David, Luis Induni, and Sara Lezana. A joint Italian, German, and Spanish production of *The Last of the Mohicans* was directed by Harold Reinl, starring Oberst Munroe, Kann Dor, and Ricardo Rodriguez.

Topics for Further Study

One of Hawkeye's most insistent assertions is that he is "a man without a cross." Why is being "pure-blooded" so important to him? Research the history of racial anxiety in early America why was "miscegenation" considered such a threat1?

Uncas and Major Heyward are both solitary men who fall in love with the Munro daughters. What do they have in common? How are they different7 Consider the characters of both men as they are revealed by the different sisters with whom they fall in love.

Consider the character of the itinerant singing master, David Gamut. What archetype of early American culture does he symbolize? Look at his character in light of Washington Irving's hero, Ichabod Crane. How is Cooper's Gamut a reworking of Crane1? What does this reworking achieve?

The Last of the Mohicans is often seen as a tribute to the doomed cultures of Native Americans. Research the history of Indian clearances in the eighteenth century. How historically accurate is Cooper's depiction?

Cooper is considered the first American author, and *The Last of the Mohicans* is often read as the first truly American novel. What is American about it?

Compare and Contrast

1760s: During the French and Indian War, the Indian presence in land that colonists desire is a secondary concern of the British. They are more interested in defeating France.

1820s: Public outcry for the removal of Indians from the path of westward expansion reaches critical mass. The solution is a series of broken treaties, military actions, and forced migrations that aim to remove the Indians to the West.

Today: Legal challenges to the Bureau of Indian Affairs reach record numbers There is more public sympathy for the plight of the Native Americans than ever before. Amnesty International joins the fight to free Leonard Peltier, an Oglala Sioux many believe to be wrongly convicted of two murders. Native rights movements demand that old treaties be honored.

1760s: Both America and Canada are ruled by European powers and are neither autonomous entities, nor heavily colonized past their eastern edges. The major cities lie along the East Coast, and Native Americans still hold most of the rest of the country, living in their traditional cultures and groups. The Indians are regarded as a nuisance and a menace.

1820s: Now a sovereign nation, the United States begins its westward expansion. Pioneers have pushed as far west as Minnesota. Native cultures in the Mississippi Valley are being decimated, and public opinion, exacerbated by newspaper accounts of the day, perceives the Indian as a constant danger. Having no legal protections, their treaties are ignored and the Indians are forced west and slaughtered in vast numbers at any sign of resistance.

Today: Native Americans are a legally protected minority, falling under the set of laws known as Affirmative Action. Confined mostly to westward reservations, Native Americans have the highest rate of suicide, unemployment, and drug and alcohol addiction of any ethnic group in the United States. On a more positive note, financial gains are being made by the use of casinos on sovereign native lands, and Canada has granted a new and sovereign province to its natives

What Do I Read Next?

Bury My Heart at Wounded Knee is Dee Brown's 1971 history of Indian massacres in nineteenth-century America. Brown's book forced America to reassess the cowboys-and-Indians myths of the Old West and its historical treatment of native people.

The Prairie is Cooper's 1827 novel about an old Natty Bumppo in the newly independent United States. Iowa is called "The Hawkeye State" in honor of Cooper's hero.

Persuasion is Jane Austen's 1818 novel about a young woman's search for happiness. This is the novel that Cooper is alleged to have been reading when he announced that he could write a better book,*Waverley,* Sir Walter Scott's 1814 novel about the Jacobite Rebellion, was a publishing phenomenon, and sold in massive numbers both in Britain and the United States. In it, Scott established the historical novel as a popular literary genre.

Nathaniel Hawthorne's 1850 novel, *The Scarlet Letter,* is a historical novel that reassesses myths about early American life. The story of Hester Prynne and her punishment questions the morality of Puritanism and investigates the interaction of colonial America with the wilderness and its inhabitants.

A Narrative of the Captivity and Restoration is Mary White Rowlandson's 1682 account of being captured by a band of rebelling Indians. One of the earliest "abduction narratives," Rowland-son's story reveals the religious, cultural, and political tensions between the colonizers and the indigenous people.

Letters from an American Farmer is J. Hector St. John de Crevecoeur's 1782 "novel" about American life before and during the Revolution. Structured as a series of fictional letters from a self-made farmer, Crevecoeur's book was immensely popular in Europe, where it was largely responsible for^creating the standard perception of U.S. character□self-reliance, hard-work, honesty, and sympathy with nature.

Further Study

John Gottlieb Ernestus Heckewelder, *An Account of the History, Manners, and Customs, of the Indian Nations, Who Once Inhabited Pennsylvania and the Neighbouring States: Communicated to the Historical and Literary Committee of the American Philosophical Society, Held at Philadelphia, for Promoting Useful Knowledge,* pnnted and published by Abraham Small, 1818

Heckewelder's book has been identified as Cooper's main source of information in drawing his Indian characters

Donald A Ringe, *James Fenimore Cooper,* Twayne, 1988. Biography and critical overview of Cooper's literary career.

Marilyn Gaddis Rose, "Time Discrepancy in "The Last of the Mohicans,"' *American Notes and Queries,* January, 1970, pp. 72-3.

Rose considers Cooper's skills as a historian, and suggests that while he kept his facts straight, he had a tendency to deviate from chronology

Seymour I. Schwartz, *The French and Indian War, 1754-1763: The Imperial Struggle for North America,* Simon & Schuster, 1994

A history of the French and Indian War that forms the backdrop to *The Last of the Mohicans.*

William Thorp, "Cooper Beyond America," *North York History,*October, 1954, pp. 522-29.

Illustrates the literary influence that Cooper had on European literature of the nineteenth century.

W M. Verhoeven, editor, *James Fenimore Cooper: New Historical and Literary Contexts,* Rodopi, 1993.

A collection of new essays that assess Cooper's novels from a historically materialist perspective.

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George Dekker, "Lilhes That Fester "The Last of the Mohicans' and "The Woman Who Rode Away,'" *New Left Review,* November-December, 1964, pp 75-84.

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Liverpool Repository, July-August, 1826, pp 384, 448

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Introduction

Purpose of the Book

The purpose of Novels for Students (NfS) is to provide readers with a guide to understanding, enjoying, and studying novels by giving them easy access to information about the work. Part of Gale's□For Students□ Literature line, NfS is specifically designed to meet the curricular needs of high school and undergraduate college students and their teachers, as well as the interests of general readers and researchers considering specific novels. While each volume contains entries on □classic□ novels

frequently studied in classrooms, there are also entries containing hard-to-find information on contemporary novels, including works by multicultural, international, and women novelists.

The information covered in each entry includes an introduction to the novel and the novel's author; a plot summary, to help readers unravel and understand the events in a novel; descriptions of important characters, including explanation of a given character's role in the novel as well as discussion about that character's relationship to other characters in the novel; analysis of important themes in the novel; and an explanation of important literary techniques and movements as they are demonstrated in the novel.

In addition to this material, which helps the readers analyze the novel itself, students are also provided with important information on the literary and historical background informing each work. This includes a historical context essay, a box comparing the time or place the novel was written to modern Western culture, a critical overview essay, and excerpts from critical essays on the novel. A unique feature of NfS is a specially commissioned critical essay on each novel, targeted toward the student reader.

To further aid the student in studying and enjoying each novel, information on media adaptations is provided, as well as reading suggestions for works of fiction and nonfiction on similar themes and topics. Classroom aids include ideas for research papers and lists of critical sources that provide additional material on the novel.

Selection Criteria

The titles for each volume of NfS were selected by surveying numerous sources on teaching literature and analyzing course curricula for various school districts. Some of the sources surveyed included: literature anthologies; Reading Lists for College-Bound Students: The Books Most Recommended by America's Top Colleges; textbooks on teaching the novel; a College Board survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; a National Council of Teachers of English (NCTE) survey of novels commonly studied in high schools; the NCTE's Teaching Literature in High School: The Novel;and the Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) list of best books for young adults of the past twenty-five years. Input was also solicited from our advisory board, as well as educators from various areas. From these discussions, it was determined that each volume should have a mix of □classic□ novels (those works commonly taught in literature classes) and contemporary novels for which information is often hard to find. Because of the interest in expanding the canon of literature, an emphasis was also placed on including works by international, multicultural, and women authors. Our advisory board members□educational professionals□ helped pare down the list for each volume. If a work was not selected for the present volume, it was often noted as a possibility for a future volume. As always, the editor welcomes suggestions for titles to be included in future volumes.

How Each Entry Is Organized

Each entry, or chapter, in NfS focuses on one novel. Each entry heading lists the full name of the novel, the author's name, and the date of the novel's publication. The following elements are contained in each entry:

- Introduction: a brief overview of the novel which provides information about its first appearance, its literary standing, any controversies surrounding the work, and major conflicts or themes within the work.
- Author Biography: this section includes basic facts about the author's life, and focuses on events and times in the author's life that inspired the novel in question.
- Plot Summary: a factual description of the major events in the novel. Lengthy summaries are broken down with subheads.
- Characters: an alphabetical listing of major characters in the novel. Each character name is followed by a brief to an extensive description of the character's role in the novel, as well as discussion of the character's actions, relationships, and possible motivation. Characters are listed alphabetically by last name. If a character is unnamed□for instance, the narrator in Invisible Man-the character is listed as □The Narrator□ and alphabetized as □Narrator.□ If a character's first name is the only one given, the name will appear alphabetically by that name. □ Variant names are also included for each character. Thus, the full name □Jean Louise Finch□ would head the listing for the narrator of To Kill a Mockingbird, but listed in a separate cross-reference would be the nickname □Scout Finch.□
- Themes: a thorough overview of how the major topics, themes, and issues are addressed within the novel. Each theme discussed appears in a separate subhead, and is easily accessed through the boldface entries in the Subject/Theme Index.
- Style: this section addresses important style elements of the novel, such as setting, point of view, and narration; important literary devices used, such as imagery, foreshadowing, symbolism; and, if applicable, genres to which the work might have belonged, such as Gothicism or Romanticism. Literary terms are explained within the entry, but can also be found in the Glossary.
- Historical Context: This section outlines the social, political, and cultural climate in which the author lived and the novel was created. This section may include descriptions of related historical events, pertinent aspects of daily life in the culture, and the artistic and literary sensibilities of the time in which the work was written. If the novel is a historical work, information regarding the time in which the novel is set is also included. Each section is broken down with helpful subheads.
- Critical Overview: this section provides background on the critical reputation of the novel, including bannings or any other public controversies surrounding the work. For older works, this section includes a history of how the novel was first received and how perceptions of it may have changed over the years; for more recent novels, direct quotes from early reviews may also be included.
- Criticism: an essay commissioned by NfS which specifically deals with the novel and is written specifically for the student audience, as well as excerpts from previously published criticism on the work (if available).

- Sources: an alphabetical list of critical material quoted in the entry, with full bibliographical information.
- Further Reading: an alphabetical list of other critical sources which may prove useful for the student. Includes full bibliographical information and a brief annotation.

In addition, each entry contains the following highlighted sections, set apart from the main text as sidebars:

- Media Adaptations: a list of important film and television adaptations of the novel, including source information. The list also includes stage adaptations, audio recordings, musical adaptations, etc.
- Topics for Further Study: a list of potential study questions or research topics dealing with the novel. This section includes questions related to other disciplines the student may be studying, such as American history, world history, science, math, government, business, geography, economics, psychology, etc.
- Compare and Contrast Box: an □at-a-glance□ comparison of the cultural and historical differences between the author's time and culture and late twentieth century/early twenty-first century Western culture. This box includes pertinent parallels between the major scientific, political, and cultural movements of the time or place the novel was written, the time or place the novel was set (if a historical work), and modern Western culture. Works written after 1990 may not have this box.
- What Do I Read Next?: a list of works that might complement the featured novel or serve as a contrast to it. This includes works by the same author and others, works of fiction and nonfiction, and works from various genres, cultures, and eras.

Other Features

NfS includes □The Informed Dialogue: Interacting with Literature,□ a foreword by Anne Devereaux Jordan, Senior Editor for Teaching and Learning Literature (TALL), and a founder of the Children's Literature Association. This essay provides an enlightening look at how readers interact with literature and how Novels for Students can help teachers show students how to enrich their own reading experiences.

A Cumulative Author/Title Index lists the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series.

A Cumulative Nationality/Ethnicity Index breaks down the authors and titles covered in each volume of the NfS series by nationality and ethnicity.

A Subject/Theme Index, specific to each volume, provides easy reference for users who may be studying a particular subject or theme rather than a single work. Significant subjects from events to broad themes are included, and the entries pointing to the specific theme discussions in each entry are indicated in boldface.

Each entry has several illustrations, including photos of the author, stills from film adaptations (if available), maps, and/or photos of key historical events.

Citing Novels for Students

When writing papers, students who quote directly from any volume of Novels for Students may use the following general forms. These examples are based on MLA style; teachers may request that students adhere to a different style, so the following examples may be adapted as needed. When citing text from NfS that is not attributed to a particular author (i.e., the Themes, Style, Historical Context sections, etc.), the following format should be used in the bibliography section:

□Night.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 234-35.

When quoting the specially commissioned essay from NfS (usually the first piece under the □Criticism□ subhead), the following format should be used:

Miller, Tyrus. Critical Essay on □Winesburg, Ohio.□ Novels for Students. Ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski. Vol. 4. Detroit: Gale, 1998. 335-39.

When quoting a journal or newspaper essay that is reprinted in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Malak, Amin. □Margaret Atwood's □The Handmaid's Tale and the Dystopian Tradition,□ Canadian Literature No. 112 (Spring, 1987), 9-16; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 4, ed. Marie Rose Napierkowski (Detroit: Gale, 1998), pp. 133-36.

When quoting material reprinted from a book that appears in a volume of NfS, the following form may be used:

Adams, Timothy Dow. □Richard Wright: □Wearing the Mask,□ in Telling Lies in Modern American Autobiography (University of North Carolina Press, 1990), 69-83; excerpted and reprinted in Novels for Students, Vol. 1, ed. Diane Telgen (Detroit: Gale, 1997), pp. 59-61.

We Welcome Your Suggestions

The editor of Novels for Students welcomes your comments and ideas. Readers who wish to suggest novels to appear in future volumes, or who have other suggestions, are cordially invited to contact the editor. You may contact the editor via email at: ForStudentsEditors@gale.com. Or write to the editor at:

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