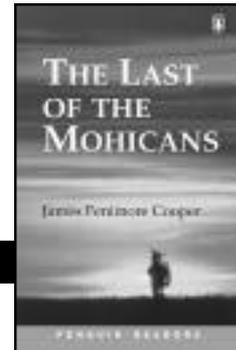


Teacher's notes

The Last of the Mohicans

by James Fenimore Cooper



SUMMARY

The *Last of the Mohicans* is an action packed, romantic adventure set in the American outback at a time when the French were fighting the British for control of North America and both sides enlisted the help of warlike Indian tribes.

The story begins with Cora and Alice, the daughters of the British Colonel Munro, being taken by Major Duncan Heyward out of Fort Edward to visit their father at Fort William Henry. The three white people decide not to go with the rest of the group but to use the services of an Indian guide, Magua. They do not realise that Magua is a Huron, on the side of the French, and that he hates the British and Colonel Munro in particular. He plans to make Cora his wife.

Fortunately, the party comes across Hawkeye, a white man who knows Indian ways, and Chingachgook and Uncas, the last two being the only survivors of the Mohican tribe. Hawkeye recognises Magua and rescues the girls and the Major but Magua escapes. They realize that he will return with a party of Hurons and this he does. There follows a succession of skirmishes, battles and daring escapes, with Magua eventually taking the girls prisoner again. At the top of a mountain, Magua asks Cora to choose between being his wife and being killed but in the nick of time, so it seems, Uncas arrives. However, as he is trying to rescue Cora, she is killed by one of Magua's companions. Uncas kills the Indian, but is killed himself by Magua.

Hawkeye chases Magua, who leaps from one cliff to another. He soon misses his step and falls to his death.

ABOUT JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

James Fenimore Cooper was born on September 15th, 1789, only shortly after the end of the War of Independence in which the American colonies gained their independence from Britain. Cooper was the first major American novelist. He is most famous for his stories of frontier adventure which featured the scout Hawkeye, including *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), and *The Deerslayer* (1841). Cooper wrote movingly about the conflict between two versions of The American Dream – on the one hand, the frontier, untamed and full of natural beauty and on the other

hand, the cultivation and progress that the pioneers brought to the wilderness. Cooper was impressed by both versions and because of this, in *The Pioneers*, he created the first and perhaps the finest portrayal of the American frontier. In the process, he also wrote the first truly American novel. Cooper died on September 14, 1851, in New York State.

BACKGROUND AND THEMES

The Last of the Mohicans is set in upstate New York, bordering Canada, during the French and Indian War in the mid-eighteenth century. The story revolves around the spirit of heroism which Cooper, and many others, believe pervaded the age. The land is tough and the men, (and even some of the women) who live in it are tough, too. But although they are tough, they still fall in love. The story is dramatic but romantic, too.

The title of the story shows clearly that Cooper felt this pioneer life was under threat. Not only the Mohicans but all the Indians, indeed all who lived on the frontier, are threatened with extinction. Cooper's prediction proved absolutely accurate, although not within his lifetime.

A minor theme of the novel is that of colour and colour prejudice. Munro is outraged when he thinks Heyward does not like his daughter, Cora, because she is half-caste, her mother having been West Indian. Hawkeye is white but lives like an Indian, and feels more kinship with the Indians than white people. Since it is almost certainly colour prejudice which led to the destruction or subjugation of the Indian peoples, this is a telling undercurrent to the story.

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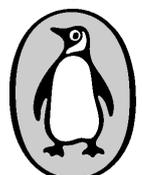
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ELEMENTARY

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS



Teacher's notes

Communicative activities

The following teacher-led activities cover the same sections of text as the exercises at the back of the Reader and supplement those exercises. For supplementary exercises covering shorter sections of the book, see the photocopiable Student's Activities pages of this Factsheet. These are primarily for use with class readers but, with the exception of the discussion and pair/groupwork activities, can also be used by students working alone in a self-access center

ACTIVITIES BEFORE READING THE BOOK

Write the captions from the pictures on the board in jumbled order. Ask students to work in groups. One person in each group shows each picture to the others with the caption covered. Students have to try to work out which caption fits the picture. If students get it right, the person tells them, If they get it wrong, the person leaves that picture and goes on to another one until they have worked out all the captions.

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING A SECTION

Chapters 1-3

Put students into pairs to role play one or both of the following scenes:

- 1 Magua is with Heyward. Magua doesn't speak English, or doesn't try. He must 'tell' Heyward in sign language that he knows a way through the woods to the fort. He persuades Heyward to go with him with the two girls.
- 2 Cora has just met Uncas. He speaks a little English, and asks her some questions.

Chapters 4-9

- 1 Remind students that in Chapter 5, it says:
'He (Hawkeye) and Chingachgook spoke in the Mohican language. Then in English Chingachgook said: "Yes, good." After that they leave the girls and Heyward. Put students into groups to work out what Hawkeye said to Chingachgook? What is Hawkeye's plan? Why do he, Uncas and Chingachgook leave the girls?
- 2 Put students into groups and ask them to explain in their own words why Magua hates the British and Colonel Munro in particular. All the information is in Chapter 7.

Chapters 10-15

- 1 Put students into groups to discuss these questions about the information in Chapters 10 and 11.
 - (a) Why didn't General Webb's men come to Fort William Henry?
 - (b) Why did Colonel Munro send Heyward to Montcalm.
 - (c) Why did the fighting stop?
 - (d) What did Montcalm want to talk about?
 - (e) Who does Heyward want to marry?
 - (f) Why is Munro angry with Heyward at first?

- 2 Discuss in pairs these questions about Chapter 15.

- (a) Who was brave? In what way?
- (b) Who died? How did each person die?
- (c) Who was sad? Why?
- (d) Who was probably happy?

ACTIVITIES AFTER READING THE BOOK

Who is the Last of the Mohicans? Explain your answer

Glossary

It will be useful for your students to know the following new words. They are practised in the 'Before You Read' sections of exercises at the back of the book. (Definitions are based on those in the Longman Active Study Dictionary.)

Chapters 1-3

- blood** (n) the red liquid that your heart pumps around your body
canoe (n) a long light narrow boat that is pointed at both ends
cave (n) a large natural hole in the side of a life or under the ground
chief (n) the leader of a tribe
colonel (n) an officer with a high rank in the army
fort (n) a strong building used by soldiers for defending a place
general (n) an officer with a high rank in the army
major (n) an officer of middle rank in the army
safe (adj) not in danger of being harmed
skin (n) the outside part of a human's or animal's body
tribe (n) a group of people who have the same race, language and customs and who live together in the same area

Chapters 4-9

- cliff** (n) a steep rock or piece of land
fire (n) the flames, light and heat produced when something burns
heart (n) the part of the body inside your chest that pumps blood around your body
hold (v) to have something in your hand or hands
save (v) to make someone or something safe from danger
scalp (n) the skin on the top of your head, where your hair grows
scalp (v) to cut off a dead enemies scalp as a sign of victory



Student's activities

The Last of the Mohicans



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ELEMENTARY

THE LAST OF THE MOHICANS

Photocopiable

Students can do these exercises alone or with one or more other students. Pair/group-only activities are marked.

Activities before reading the book

Work in pairs. Find these things in at least one picture.

canoe cliff gun Indian knife river sword
tomahawk waterfall wild animal woods

Activities while reading the book

Chapters 1–3

- Match each name from Chapters 1 and 2 with a description from the box. You can use the same description more than once.
 - a British colonel
 - a British fort
 - a British general
 - a British major
 - a daughter of Munro
 - a French general
 - a Huron Indian
 - a Mohican chief
 - a river
 - a white man who wears clothes of animal skins
 - an Indian tribe
 - the son of Chingachgook
 - (a) William Henry
 - (b) Montcalm
 - (c) Edward
 - (d) Munro
 - (e) Webb
 - (f) Cora
 - (g) Alice
 - (h) Magua
 - (i) Duncan Heyward
 - (j) Hudson
 - (k) Chingachgook
 - (l) Hawkeye
 - (m) Uncas
 - (n) The Mohicans
 - (o) The Hurons
- Work in pairs. Put the people in Exercise 1 into two groups. Explain your answer.
- In Chapter 3, who or what was/were ...
 - (a) up the river
 - (b) under some trees
 - (c) wide, fast and dangerous
 - (d) afraid
 - (e) strange

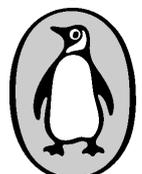
- (f) big
- (g) strong
- (h) long, black
- (i) very light
- (j) very pretty
- (k) quiet

Chapters 4–9

- Five Hurons died in Chapter 4. How did each one die?
- Discuss in pairs these questions about Chapter 5.
 - (a) What was Cora's plan?
 - (b) Who did not follow her plan?
 - (c) Why not?
- Match the questions (a–f) and answers (i–vi) about the information in Chapter 6.
 - (a) Why did Cora say 'We'll die now.?'
 - (b) Why did Alice say, 'We won't die!?'
 - (c) Why did Alice's face change?
 - (d) Why did Magua run away?
 - (e) Why did the Indians smile?
 - (f) Why were the Indians angry when Magua repeated the conversation in their language?
 - (i) Because Hawkeye was not there.
 - (ii) Because Heyward fired his gun at him.
 - (iii) Because she saw Magua outside the cave.
 - (iv) Because the Hurons went away.
 - (v) Because they had the white man and the daughters of Colonel Munro.
 - (vi) Because they heard war cries near the cave.
- Complete these sentences about the information in Chapter 7. Use a word from the box in each case.

animal arm back canoe fire-water hair knife
knives men night river wife woods

- (a) A dark hand suddenly pulled Alice's long ...
- (b) The young Indian pulled out his ... , but an older Indian stopped him.
- (c) The Indians took the girls and Heyward down the fast ...
- (d) Then they got out of the ...
- (e) They walked for a long time through the dark ...
- (f) A young Huron killed an animal at ...
- (g) Magua took Cora's ... , but she pulled it away.
- (h) He told her that white men gave him ...
- (i) He also told her that her father hit him many times on his ...
- (j) He said he wanted Cora to be his ...



Student's activities

- (k) Cora was angry and said 'You are an ...'
 (l) Magua spoke to the Hurons about white ... and the home of their grandfathers.
 (n) They pulled out their ... and tomahawks and ran to Heyward, Cora and Alice.

5 Complete this summary of the information in Chapter 8 with the correct names in each space.

Magua says that (a) ... and (b) ... can go to (c) ... if (d) ... stays and lives with him. But (d) ... says 'We will die' and (e) ... throws his tomahawk at her. It cuts off some of (f) ... yellow hair. (g) ... tries to scalp (h) ... and ... jumps on him. Suddenly there is a loud noise and (l) ... falls dead on the ground next to (j)

6 Complete these sentences about the information in Chapter 10 with the correct preposition or adverb from the box in each space.

across after around at back down in into of
out through to with

- (a) Uncas, Chingachgook and Hawkeye ran ... from behind the trees and attacked the Hurons.
 (b) They killed five men ... their knives and tomahawks.
 (c) Magua fell but then jumped up and ran ... the woods.
 (d) Hawkeye said they didn't go a long way ... the river.
 (e) They watched from ... the river.
 (f) They all went quickly ... the woods.
 (g) They got to the top ... the mountain and saw Fort William Henry and Montcalm's men.
 (h) ... the bottom of the mountain they stopped.
 (i) Suddenly somebody shouted ... French then guns fired at them.
 (j) Hawkeye fired ... and the French shot again.
 (k) They ran to the fort and the French ran ... them.
 (l) Suddenly they heard Colonel Munro and his daughters ran ... him.
 (m) The old Colonel put his arms ... them and cried.

Chapters 10–15

- 1 Put these events from Chapter 12 in order.
 (a) Cora and Gamut ran after Magua.
 (b) Magua took Alice and carried her into the woods.
 (c) Magua took the girls and Gamut to the top of the mountain.
 (d) Montcalm gave Munro the letter from General Webb.
 (e) Munro and his daughters and his men left the fort.
 (f) Munro and Montcalm talked.
 (g) The French arrived and went into the fort.
 (h) The Hurons attacked the British.
- 2 These sentences about the information in Chapter 13 are not quite true. Can you correct them?

- (a) Munro went back to the place of the great fight with Heyward, Hawkeye, Chingachgook, Uncas and Magua.
 (b) They walked around the sick men.
 (c) Munro found Cora and Alice in a pool of blood.
 (d) Hawkeye saw Cora run into the woods.
 (e) Hawkeye killed Magua with his gun.
 (f) At night there was a fire in the woods.
 (g) Hawkeye and Uncas found Gamut teaching the animals to sing.

3 Match each sentence (a–j) from Chapter 14 with a reply (i–x).

- (a) Where are the girls?
 (b) Are they safe?
 (c) Where's Magua?
 (d) Why are you here?
 (e) Why don't you run away?
 (f) Go to them quietly. Give them hope. We will save them.
 (g) I'll go too.
 (h) This is a very dangerous plan but maybe you'll save the girls.
 (i) Two of my men are following your friend. They will catch him and bring him here.
 (j) Where's my friend, Uncas? Can you take me to him.
 (i) Do Hurons have no ears? Don't you hear my friend's gun fire two times. Your men will never come back.
 (ii) Do you want to die?
 (iii) He's in the woods. He's shooting animals for food.
 (iv) I'll go.
 (v) I'm not afraid.
 (vi) It's very dangerous, but I can.
 (vii) The girls are here. I have to stay with them.
 (viii) They're with the Hurons.
 (ix) To the Hurons, I'm strange. I'm not a man, so I can come and go. They don't stop me.
 (x) Yes. They're tired and unhappy but they're well.

Activities after reading the book

Discuss the following questions in pairs.

- 1 Which is your favourite character in the story? Why?
 2 Which character do you not like? Why

