

PENGUIN CLASSICS
JAMES FENIMORE
COOPER
THE LAST OF
THE MOHICANS

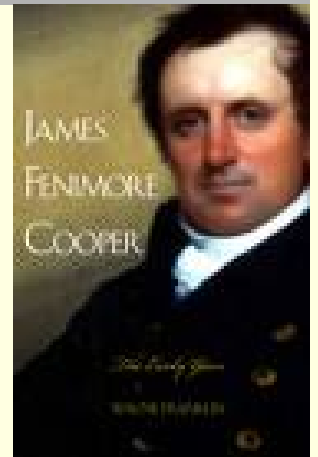


The Last of the Mohicans

James Fenimore Cooper
(1789 - 1851)

James Fenimore Cooper

- Born in Burlington, New Jersey
- Father was a wealthy landowner who founded Cooperstown, New York
- Expelled from Yale
- Worked as a sailor for a few years
- Married Susan DeLancey
- Became a gentleman farmer



James Fenimore Cooper

- Openly criticized President Andrew Jackson
- Lost much of his popularity
- 50 volumes of literature
- Focus on early Americans and the American landscape
- Foundation of American Literature



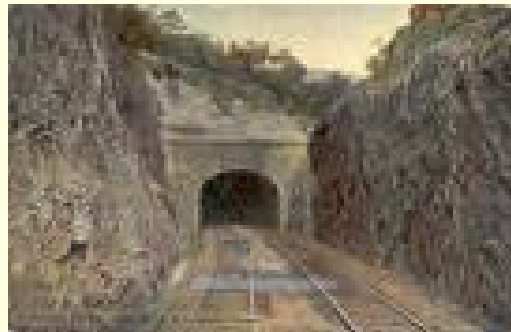
Cooper's Time Period 1789

- He was born same year as President Washington was inaugurated
- French Revolution raged.
- The First U.S. Congress met in New York.
- Mozart wrote in Vienna.
- Plans were made for Washington D.C.



Cooper's Time Period 1826

- *The Last of the Mohicans* was published.
- First railroad tunnel was built in England.
- Thomas Jefferson died.
- John Quincy Adams was president.



Cooper's Time Period 1851

- Cooper died.
- *The New York Times* first appeared.
- Melville published *Moby Dick*, and Hawthorne published *The House of the Seven Gables*.
- Maine and Illinois enforced prohibition of alcohol.
- The U.S. population reached 23 million.



The Leatherstocking Tales

- The adventures of frontiersman Natty Bumppo, also known as Leatherstocking, **Hawkeye**, and Pathfinder, among other names.
- Bumppo is introduced as a young man in *The Deerslayer*, the first novel in terms of content but the last to be published.
- The novels tell of his adventures living a life of freedom in the wilderness of New York and of his retreat from the advance of civilization.
- They end with his old age and death in the Great Plains region of the West.

The Leatherstocking Tales

5 Novels

1. ***The Deerslayer or The First Warpath***

The first of the Leatherstocking Tales depicts Natty Bumppo in his youth. It is a rousing story of warfare between the Iroquois Indians and the white settlers in the Lake Otsego region of New York before 1745. 1841

2. ***The Last of the Mohicans***

Follows Natty's exploits against the Huron Indians in the Lake Champlain region. 1826

3. ***The Pathfinder or The Inland Sea***

Tells of Natty's adventures in the French and Indian War and of the first and only time he falls in love. 1840

4. ***The Pioneers or The Sources of the Susquehanna***

Filled with descriptions of hunting and trapping, this novel continues the story of the old hunter known as Leatherstocking. A romance ensues between Natty's friend, Oliver Edwards, and Elizabeth Temple, the daughter of a landowner. 1823

5. ***The Prairie***

Portrays the last days of Leatherstocking, now an exile whom civilization has driven westward to the prairie beyond the Mississippi. Here the old scout becomes a trapper. 1827

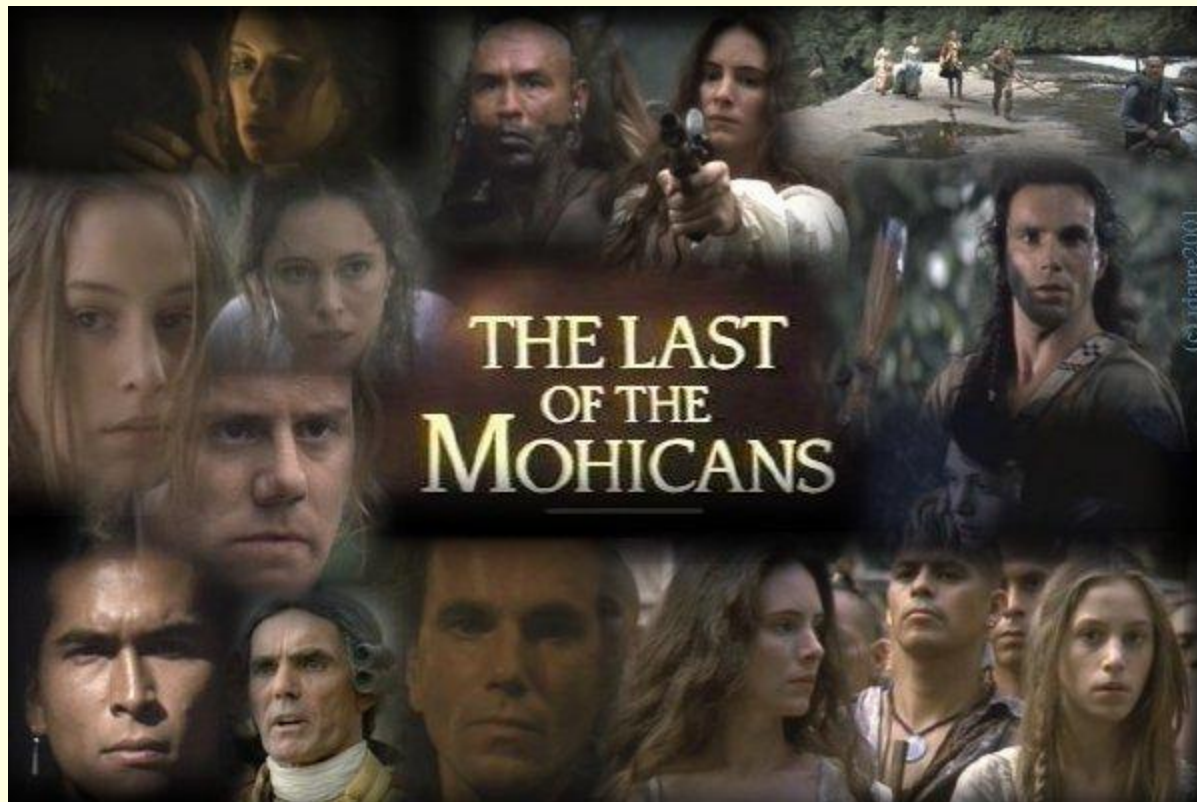
Genre

- Sentimental novel
- Adventure novel
- Frontier romance



Point of View

- Third Person Omniscient
- Describes several characters objectively



Setting

- July to mid-August 1757 during the French and Indian War
- The American wilderness in what will become New York state



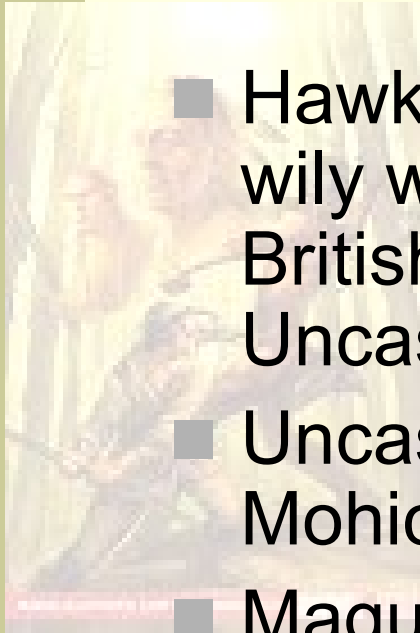
Major Characters

- Cora Munro – A pretty, dark-haired young woman who shows intelligence and strength
- Alice Munro – A blond, blue-eyed young woman who relies on her sister Cora
- David Gamut – Lanky, awkward singing teacher who helps rescue the sisters by pretending to be a madman in order to move freely among the Indians



Major Characters

- Hawkeye – Protagonist; an experienced and wily woodsman who acts as a scout for the British; a close friend of Chingachgook and Uncas
- Uncas – Son of Chingachgook, the last of the Mohicans, who dies trying to save Cora
- Magua – Huron brave who pretends to be a scout for the British although he is secretly in league with the French; a bitter man who eventually murders Cora



Minor Characters

- Chingachgook – Father of Uncas, friend of Hawkeye and Delaware Chief Tamenund
- Colonel Munro – Commander of the British troops at Fort William Henry during the French and Indian War; father of Alice and Cora
- Major Duncan Heyward – Young officer stationed at Fort William Henry who watches over the Munro sisters; secretly in love with Alice Munro

Minor Characters

- Chief Tamenund – Wise old chief of the Delawares, boyhood friend of Chingachgook
- General Webb – British commander of troops in a distant area; unable to send help to Colonel Munro
- General Montcalm – Commander of the French forces

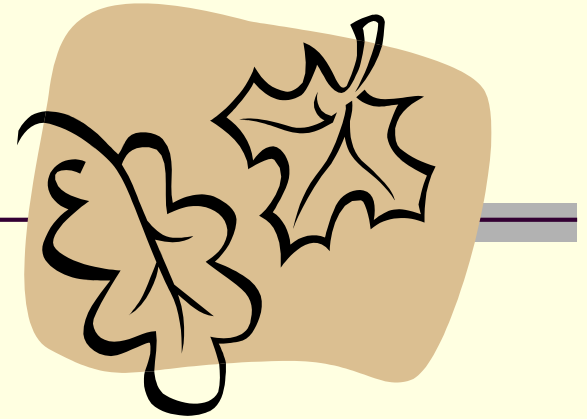
Themes

- Interracial Love and Friendship

- Friendship seems to be encouraged by Cooper: Hawkeye and the Mohicans are friends.
- Interracial love seems to be discouraged by Cooper. Uncas and Cora's love ends in tragedy, and the relationship between Cora and Magua is portrayed as unnatural.



Themes

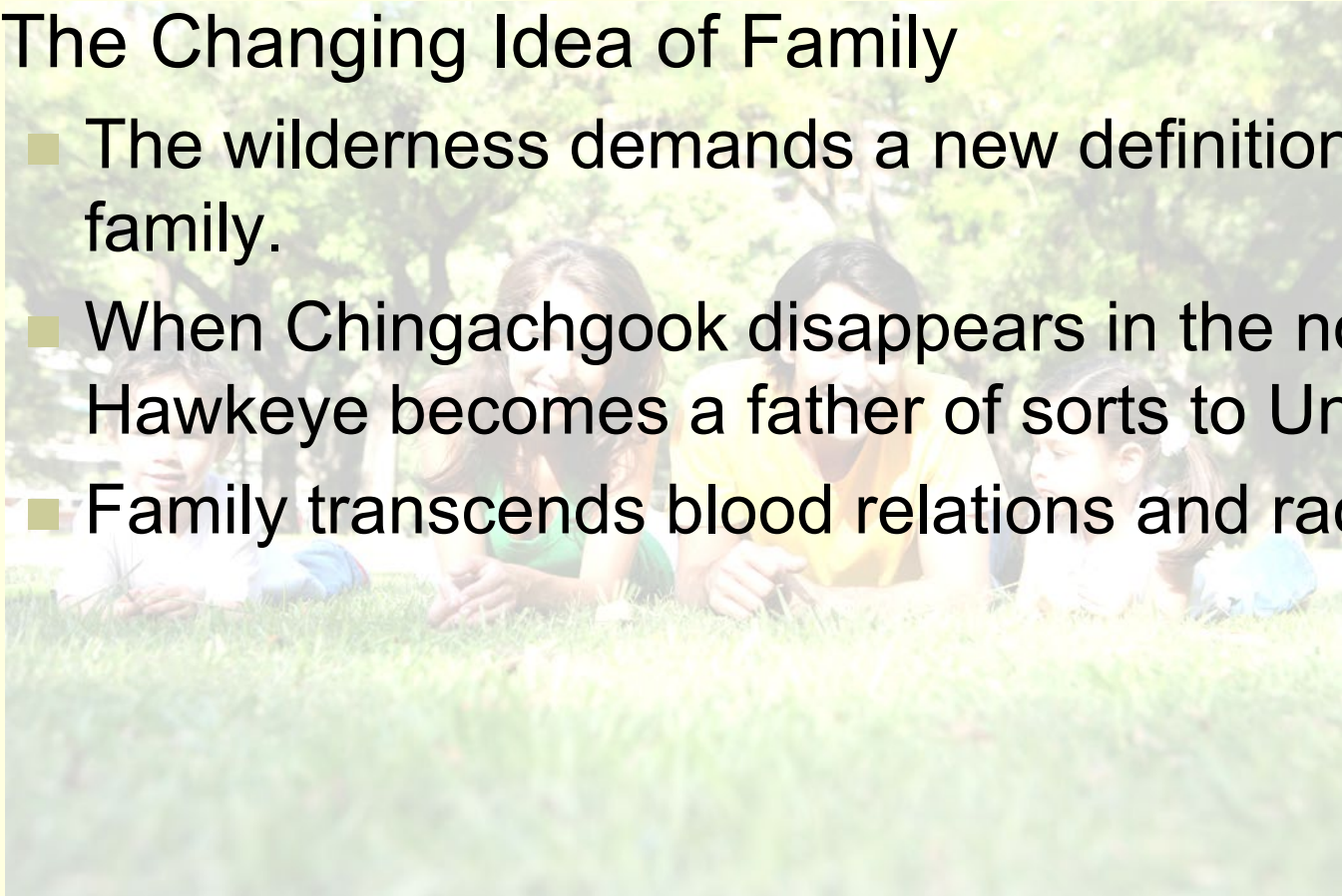


- Literal and Metaphorical Nature
 - Nature functions in both ways.
- Literally, nature is a the physical frontier that challenges the characters.
- Metaphorically, the characters are defined by their relationships with nature.
 - Heyward shows his incompetence.
 - Magua uses nature to hide his captives and himself.
 - Hawkeye displays his intelligence and ingenuity through his knowledge of nature.

Themes

■ The Changing Idea of Family

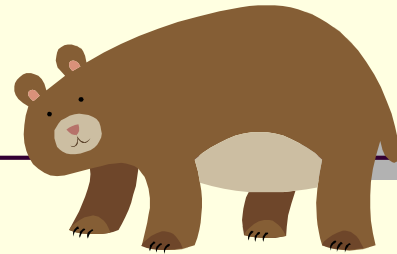
- The wilderness demands a new definition of family.
- When Chingachgook disappears in the novel, Hawkeye becomes a father of sorts to Uncas.
- Family transcends blood relations and races.



Motifs

- Motifs are recurring structures, contrasts, or literary devices that can develop and inform the text's major themes.
- Hybridity
 - Race and Family
 - Cora – white father and black mother
 - Hawkeye – white by blood but Indian in nature

Motifs



- Disguise
 - Used to resolve plot difficulties and provide comic relief
 - Man disguised as a bear is actually mistaken for a bear.
- Inheritance
 - Family is redefined.
 - Hawkeye becomes a father to Uncas and oversees Uncas' coming-of-age.

Symbols

■ Hawkeye

- Both a character and symbol
- Used to symbolize hybridity, the mixing of European and Indian cultures.
- Also symbolizes the nature hero woodsman
- Symbolic father to Uncas



Symbols

- *The Last of the Mohicans*

- The title symbolizes the death of the Indian culture at the hands of the encroaching European civilization.
- Specifically refers to Uncas
- Also refers to the genocidal removal of the Indians by President Andrew Jackson in the 1830s

Important Quotes

1. “There is reason in an Indian, though nature has made him with a red skin! . . . I am no scholar, and I care not who knows it; but judging from what I have seen, at deer chases and squirrel hunts, of the sparks below, I should think a rifle in the hands of their grandfathers was not so dangerous as a hickory bow and a good flint-head might be, if drawn with Indian judgment, and sent by an Indian eye.”
-Hawkeye

Important Quotes

2. “I am not a prejudiced man, nor one who vaunts himself on his natural privileges, though the worst enemy I have on earth, and he is an Iroquois, daren’t deny that I am genuine white.”
-Hawkeye

Important Quotes

3. “A Mingo is a Mingo, and God having made him so, neither the Mohawks nor any other tribe can alter him.”

-Hawkeye

Important Quotes

4. “The Hurons love their friends the Delawares. . . . Why should they not? They are colored by the same sun, and their just men will hunt in the same grounds after death. The redskins should be friends, and look with open eyes on the white men.”

-Magua

Important Quotes

5. “The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the red-men has not yet come again. My day has been too long.”

-Tamenund