

The Last of the Mohicans *Study Guide*

For the novel by James Fenimore Cooper

by Lisa Tiffin



The Last of the Mohicans Study Guide

Table of Contents

Study Guide Author	4
Note to Instructor	5
Synopsis	6
About the Novel's Author	7
Background Information	8
Ideas for Prereading Activities	9
Chapters 1–3	10
Chapters 4–6	15
Chapters 7–9	19
Chapters 10–12	25
Chapters 13–15	30
Chapters 16–18	36
Chapters 19–21	41
Chapters 22–24	44
Chapters 25–27	48
Chapters 28–30	52
Chapters 31–33	55
Overview	60
Essays	64
Additional Resources	66
Answer Key	Separate File

The Last of the Mohicans Study Guide

Synopsis

In *The Last of the Mohicans*, the second book in his *Leatherstocking Tales*, James Fenimore Cooper weaves a tale of love, courage, and honor in the format of an adventure novel, the likes of which had never been seen before in American literature.

Set during the third year of the French and Indian War (1754–1763), the plot revolves around the journey of two sisters, Cora and Alice Munro, as they attempt to reach their father, General Munro, at Fort William Henry. Escorted by a young officer, Duncan Heyward, and an Indian runner named Magua, the girls are soon joined by the psalm-singer, David Gamut. When the party becomes lost in the woods, a scout, Hawkeye, and his Native American companions, Chingachgook and Uncas, agree to show them the way to the fort.

Cooper employs twists and turns, captures, deceptions, and double agents to keep the reader engaged as he explores issues of love, prejudice, race relations, land ownership, and courage. Through it all—the bloody battles, the treachery and the defeats—Cooper continually raises the question of unity among the races.

The Last of the Mohicans Study Guide

Chapters 25–27

Vocabulary:

Choose the word from the Word Box below that best completes each sentence. One or more synonyms for the missing word is given in parentheses.

Word Box			
desolate	austere	discreet	obliterated
sagacity	resolution	expeditiously	pinioned
mortification	ludicrous	injudicious	eloquence
duplicity			

1. The beast still continued its rolling, and apparently untiring movements, though its _____ (*laughable, ridiculous, comical*) attempt to imitate the melody of David ceased the instant the latter abandoned the field.
2. . . . Duncan now found himself alone in that wild and _____ (*barren, wretched, dismal*) abode, with the helpless invalid, and the fierce and dangerous brute.
3. In a moment every frightening or offensive mark was _____ (*blotted, erased, expunged*), and the youth appeared again in the lineaments with which he had been gifted by nature.
4. The exulting Indian had resumed his _____ (*stern, severe, serious*) countenance, though he drew warily back before the menacing glance of the young man's fiery eye.
5. When the formidable Huron was completely _____ (*arms bound tightly*), the scout released his hold, and Duncan laid his enemy on his back, utterly helpless.
6. Their _____ (*graceful speech, rhetoric*), and ingenuity were expended in vain.
7. Notwithstanding the high _____ (*determination, purpose*) of Hawkeye, he fully comprehended all the difficulties and dangers he was about to incur.
8. But the scornful expression of the young man's eye admitted to so many constructions, that the worthy scout was spared the _____ (*humiliation, embarrassment*) of such a discovery.
9. He silently and _____ (*efficiently, promptly*) encased himself in the covering of the beast. . . .

The Last of the Mohicans Study Guide

10. The least _____ (*unwise, indiscreet*) or impatient movement on the part of David might betray them, and time was absolutely necessary to insure the safety of the scout.
11. In the meantime, some of the swiftest and most _____ (*cautious, prudent, wary*) of the young men were ordered to make the circuit of the clearing, under cover of the woods, in order to ascertain that their suspected neighbors, the Delawares, designed no mischief.
12. He arose, and told his tale without _____ (*double-dealing, treachery*) or reservation.
13. Had any of the Hurons turned to look behind them, they would have seen the animal watching their movements with an interest and _____ (*shrewdness, keenness, acumen*) that might easily have been mistaken for reason.

Questions:

1. Chapter 25 opens with, "There was a strange blending of the ridiculous with that which was solemn in this scene." Explain and compare that statement with Hawkeye's entrance.
2. Why wasn't Magua afraid of the bear?
3. How do Hawkeye and Heyward get Alice out of the cave?
4. How has Magua cultivated favor with the neighboring Delaware tribe? How does this improve Magua's reputation among his own people?
5. Name three specific things Magua did in his speech to persuade the Hurons to follow his plans for recovering Cora from the Delaware. What is the final result of his oration?
6. Cooper consistently shows us many sides of each character. Compare Magua as an orator and great chief with Magua at his home.

The Last of the Mohicans Study Guide

Think About the Story:

7. Samuel Taylor Coleridge wrote in his *Biographia Literaria* (1817) that good writing should produce “a semblance of truth sufficient to procure for these shadows of imagination that willing suspension of disbelief for the moment, which constitutes poetic faith.” In other words, the telling of a story should contain sufficient truth that the reader is willing to ignore portions that may be impractical or impossible. The term “*willing suspension of disbelief*” has come to be a literary term meaning that something generally impossible or implausible is made to seem plausible by the author’s skill at telling the story. In a fairy tale, we are willing to believe that a prince will search the entire kingdom for a girl who fits a slipper, and that it only fits one person. In Narnia we are willing to believe in speaking animals and passages into other worlds. In these chapters of *The Last of the Mohicans*, name at least two things that you, once you analyze it, find impossible or implausible, though it seems plausible in the story.

8. With *verbal irony*, the author or character says one thing but means something entirely different. In Chapter 25, Hawkeye makes a joke or conceit regarding his disguise. Find and write this example of verbal irony here, and also explain what Hawkeye is actually saying.

Dig Deeper:

9. Why does Hawkeye believe that while it would have been okay for an Indian to kill the conjurer and Magua, it is wrong for him to do so?

10. Read James 4:17. What does the scripture say regarding knowledge and sin? How does this apply to Hawkeye in this situation?

The Last of the Mohicans Study Guide

11. When David agrees to act the part of Uncas so Hawkeye and Uncas can escape, Hawkeye assures David that he and Uncas will seek revenge if the Hurons kill David. Why does David insist they not seek revenge? What does he ask them to do instead? What is Hawkeye's response?

12. Read Luke 23:34, Colossians 3:13, and Romans 12:19. What do these verses teach and what can we learn from Jesus' example?

The Last of the Mohicans Study Guide Answer Key

him, they will not suspect that he and the others are aware of an enemy.

3. Hawkeye and the Mohicans treat each other with mutual honor and deliberation. Although they disagree, it is obvious that Hawkeye and the Mohicans are listening respectfully to each other's opinions. Uncas' words are received with as much attention as the older men's words, and after each speaks, the others pause to consider the words before responding.

4. He stands and speaks in the manner of the Indians, acting out the consequences of going over land with the older and beaten-down Munro as opposed to the swiftness of going by canoe. By communicating in a way that the Mohicans relate to, he is able to convince them his idea was the best.

5. They carry the canoe on their shoulders and make an obvious trail through the woods to a large rock. They then retrace their steps backwards to their original spot and push off in the canoe under cover of darkness.

6. David Gamut.

Thinking About the Story:

7. Answers may vary. Heyward acts protectively towards Munro. He often takes his arm or guides him to a place to sleep.

8. Compare: Heyward respects Munro, just as Uncas respects Chingachgook. Both pairs show obvious affection for each other. Contrast: The relationships differ in that Uncas always respects Chingachgook as an elder and never speaks before him or pushes for his own way. Heyward, on the other hand, tends to take initiative and often makes decisions without consulting Munro (such as when he ordered the guards back in their meeting with Montcalm) and often defends his own position over Munro's. Heyward also speaks his desires first (such as in the canoe when he reminds Hawkeye their main goal is to recover the sisters, not fight Hurons), while Uncas waits to be called upon by the older men.

9. Answers will vary. Students should display understanding and proper usage of the two words or phrases they choose.

Dig Deeper:

10. Uncas waits because he has been trained to respect his elders. Hawkeye tells him that with book learning, young people may feel smarter than their parents, but when decisions depend upon experience, the young must respect those that are older with more experience. These verses teach us that those who are older are wise, children should be proud of their parents, gray hair is a mark of honor, and children should honor their parents.

11. In Galatians, we read there is no distinction between Jews and Greeks (any race), male and female, slave or free; we are all children of God through Christ. John tells us that any who believe in Christ and receive him are given the right to become sons of God. The verses indicate that any race, anyone at all, has equal access to God through Christ, and anyone—no matter their color or circumstances—who believes in him can become a child of God and live eternally with God in heaven.

Chapters 22–24

Vocabulary:

1. emotional, stoic; 2. cottage, edifice; 3. minstrel, buffoon; 4. documented, venerable; 5. mechanical, ingenuity; 6. combustion, volition; 7. edging, harangue; 8. musical, amity; 9. entangled, implicit; 10. expressive, masquerade; 11. thinker, auditor; 12. fascinating, recreant; 13. provincial, culprit;