CLASSICS LIBRARY · STORY MAP

The Last of the Mohicans

James Fenimore Cooper · *1826 · original English text*

In the wilderness war of 1757, a scout and two Mohican friends try to carry two daughters through forest, ambush and a broken surrender. Cooper's romance is a tale of courage, loyalty and a vanishing people, and it asks what honor is worth when the great nations have already failed to keep their word.

THE CENTRAL QUESTION

What does loyalty require when a war has already broken its promises?

"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 · Chapter XXXIII

Hawkeye, Chingachgook and Uncas keep faith with the Munro sisters after Fort William Henry's surrender is betrayed. Uncas's death is the end of a princely line, and Tamenund's lament names a historical sorrow the book will not pretty up. Courage here is personal, costly, and larger than the flags that fail.

KEY CHARACTERS

Hawk-eye (Natty Bumppo)
scout; skill and a fixed honor

Chingachgook
the father; a people's remainder

Uncas
the last princely son; courage and devotion

Cora Munro
steadfast, self-offering

Alice Munro
tender, protected, not untried

Magua
wronged, vengeful, unrelenting

Duncan Heyward
gallant, often out of his depth

Colonel Munro
a father and a soldier under a broken parole

Tamenund
the old voice of a people's ending

Grades 9–12

Read the full text free at classicslaunch.org.

01 The Forest Road

CHAPTERS I–VI

A wrong path, and the right companions found.

- Cora and Alice Munro, with Major Heyward and the singing-master David Gamut, leave Fort Edward for Fort William Henry
- Their guide, the Huron **Magua**, leads them astray
- They meet the scout **Hawk-eye**, the Mohican chief **Chingachgook**, and his son **Uncas**
- The party takes a hidden stand at the hidden rock at Glenn's

02 Glenn's and Capture

CHAPTERS VII–XII

A first siege in the woods, and a first escape.

- Magua's Hurons attack the retreat at the falls
- Ammunition fails; the three woodsmen slip away to bring help, leaving the others
- The captives are taken; Magua offers Cora a bitter bargain and is refused
- Hawk-eye and the Mohicans retake them and turn again toward the lake

03 William Henry

CHAPTERS XIII–XVII

A fortress, a parole, and a promise broken.

- The party reaches the besieged fort; Colonel Munro is holding against Montcalm
- Webb's expected relief does not come in force
- Munro surrenders on honorable terms; the departing column is attacked anyway
- In the massacre Cora and Alice are carried off once more; the woods are full of the cost of failed faith

04 The Pursuit

CHAPTERS XVIII–XXV

A long chase by water and by trail.

- Hawk-eye, the Mohicans, Heyward and Munro take up the trail
- They follow the captives toward the Canadas, reading signs the army cannot read
- David Gamut, still near the girls, becomes an unlikely link
- Alice is hidden among the Hurons; Cora is claimed toward a different camp of the Lenape

05 The Delaware Camp

CHAPTERS XXVI–XXX

A king's son is recognized, and a trial is set.

- Disguises, a rescue of Alice, and a passage into the Delaware village follow
- Tamenund, the ancient chief, hears the claims
- Uncas is revealed as the last princely Mohican, a kinsman, not a foe
- Cora is still in Magua's hold; the law of the village and the hate of the Huron are set against each other

06 The Last Warrior

CHAPTERS XXXI–XXXIII

A combat on the mountain, and a lament that does not comfort too soon.

- The pursuit climbs to a final fight among the rocks
- Cora is slain; Uncas dies trying to save her; Magua falls to Hawk-eye's rifle
- The funerals honor both the English daughter and the Mohican prince
- Tamenund speaks the close: his day has been too long, and he has lived to see the last warrior of that wise race

> *"In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis happy and strong; and yet, before the night has come, have I lived to see the last warrior of the wise race of the Mohicans."*
>
> **Tamenund** · Chapter XXXIII

Loyalty · Courage · Broken Faith · Wilderness Skill · Sacrifice · A Passing People

What to watch for as you read

GRADES 9–12

1. Hawkeye's honor is practical and exact. Watch how often a kept word, not a flag, decides what the good characters will do.
2. The surrender at William Henry is the book's public crime. What follows in the forest is, in part, the fruit of that broken parole.
3. Cora and Alice are not one character in two tones. How do their different kinds of courage shape the choices of Uncas and Heyward?
4. Magua is a villain, and Cooper also gives him injuries. Can you name the injuries without letting them excuse the revenge?
5. Tamenund's last speech is the title's meaning spoken aloud. Read it slowly; the book wants lament, not a cheap victory lap.
6. Cooper's language for native nations is of his century. Hold to the virtues the story actually honors: fidelity, piety, courage, and the grief of a line that ends.

Quotations are verbatim from the original English text, Project Gutenberg #940, the public-domain text hosted at classicslaunch.org/works/the-last-of-the-mohicans/. Citations give book and chapter (or canto and line) so every line can be checked.