The Last of the Mohicans

INTRODUCTION

BRIEF BIOGRAPHY OF JAMES FENIMORE COOPER

Related to a line of Quakers who had emigrated from England to the Northeastern United States, James Fenimore Cooper grew up in upper-middle-class comfort on the shores of Lake Otsego, in a town planned and constructed by his father: Cooperstown, New York. After study, in his teens, at Yale—where he did not graduate, because of his early dismissal for violating the university's rules—Fenimore Cooper served for several years in the US Navy, then came into the family's fortune and settled back in New York City and in Cooperstown. Fenimore Cooper began writing after a "dare" laid down by his wife, Susan, about whether he could write something better novel than a novel Susan liked. *Precaution*, Fenimore Cooper's first novel and the response to this "dare," was published in 1820. The earliest of the "Deerslayer" or "Leatherstocking" novels, entitled *The Pioneers* and featuring the adventures of Natty Bumppo, was released in 1823. *The Last of the Mohicans*, for which Fenimore Cooper is most famous, was released in 1826, and three other "Deerslayer" novels followed. Cooper also wrote non-fiction, including a volume on the history of the United States Navy. During his lifetime and after his death, aged 62, he was recognized as perhaps the first great American man of letters.

HISTORICAL CONTEXT

The founding of the United States was a complex colonial battle between the English, the French, and an overlapping set of native tribes, most of whom had been displaced by the English and French over the course of the eighteenth century. The English controlled some parts of northern North America, known as Canada, as well as the Thirteen Colonies of what became the United States. The French, who had settled North America before the English, controlled parts of Canada now known as the province of Quebec. During the French and Indian War, and continuing into the nineteenth century, the English, French, and then the Americans themselves fought for control of vital land interests across the North American continent. And the natives, with whom the whites typically and briefly allied, were then pushed farther and farther west, "relocated" into new lands, and separated from those regions in which their ancestors had lived for generations. Thus *The Last of the Mohicans* serves two purposes. First, it attempts to detail the methods by which white (English and French) settlers established the cities of North American. Second, it pieces together the "other" and preexisting civilizations that already existed in North America: namely, those of the natives.

Fenimore Cooper, to his credit, made a valiant, if not always successful, attempt to treat native society objectively, to discuss its virtues in the same breath as those of colonial society, and to represent native culture as a complex and changing one. Fenimore Cooper's depiction of native life in *The Last of the Mohicans* is one of the novel's enduring legacies in the history of American literature.

RELATED LITERARY WORKS

James Fenimore Cooper was, in many senses, a "pioneering" American writer. His five Deerslayer novels, of which *Last of the Mohicans* is the most widely read, take up the founding of the United States not on the level of grand political statements, or abstractions, but from the point of view of Hawkeye, their protagonist. Fenimore Cooper's novels see the development of an American sensibility, an American work ethic and temperament, in the relationship between white settlers, natives, and the difficult land they are to tame and farm. From Fenimore Cooper, there then descended a great number of American writers, either writing in response to, or in criticism of, Fenimore Cooper's ideals. Henry David Thoreau, author of *Walden* and of "Civil Disobedience," was a reader of Fenimore Cooper's books, as were numerous European intellectuals. The stories of Nathanial Hawthorne and the sea-tales of Herman Melville, including his magnum opus *Moby-Dick* (considered by many to be the greatest American novel ever written), are also indebted to the structure of the adventure novel set down by Fenimore Cooper in his "Deerslayer" tales.

KEY FACTS

- **Full Title:** *The Last of the Mohicans*
- **When Written:** 1825
- **Where Written:** New York City
- **When Published:** 1826
- **Literary Period:** The first wave of domestic American literary production
- **Genre:** historical novel; frontier novel
- **Setting:** The forests of upstate New York, near Lake George, 1757
- **Climax:** Magua murders Uncas and is killed by Hawkeye
- **Antagonist:** Magua
- **Point of View:** Third-person omniscient

EXTRA CREDIT

Film version. Many who have not read *The Last of the Mohicans* are nevertheless acquainted with the 1992 film version,

directed by Michael Mann and starring Daniel Day-Lewis as Hawkeye. The film, which is *not* a faithful adaptation of the novel, was praised by critics and audiences upon its release.

PLOT SUMMARY

The Last of the Mohicans is set in 1757, in what is now upstate New York near Saratoga Springs, during the French and Indian War. At its start, a young English Major named Duncan Heyward is to assist Cora and Alice Munro, daughters to Colonel Munro, as they travel from Fort Edward (commanded by General Webb) to Fort William Henry (commanded by Col. Munro). This band has, for its guide, a former Mingo, or Iroquois, now allied with the Delaware natives and the English, named Magua. The band sets off for Fort William Henry, meets up with a Christian singer of psalms named David along the path, and gets lost.

Heyward, spotting a scout named Hawkeye, also known as Natty Bumppo and who describes himself as a "**man without a cross**," and two Mohicans (natives allied with the English and related to the Delawares) named Uncas and Chingachgook, asks them for advice in getting to the fort. Hawkeye says it is suspicious that Magua, a native runner, would get lost in the woods, and in confronting Magua, Hawkeye causes him to run away, deserting the band. Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook agree to escort the band the rest of the way, and attempt to protect them from Mingo (or Huron) attacks. But after the band hides in a cave and runs out of gunpowder, Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook retreat to send word to General Webb, and Magua and a group of Hurons capture Heyward, Alice, Cora, and David. Magua demands that Cora marry him, and Cora refuses. Magua then attempts to kill the remainder of the band, only to have his Huron allies killed by Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook, who have returned from their strategic retreat. The lives of all the members of the band are spared, and all the Hurons except Magua are killed. Magua escapes northward, near Lake George, and the band makes its way to Fort William Henry, where they are welcomed by Munro.

Munro has been attempting to withstand a French siege of his fort, led by French Marquis de Montcalm, but after learning that General Webb will not reinforce Munro, Munro hands over the fort to Montcalm. Montcalm assures Munro that the English soldiers and women and children will have safe passage from the fort back to their other encampments. But Montcalm does not do enough to stop Magua and other Hurons from massacring many of the English as they leave the fort. Munro, Hawkeye, Heyward, Uncas, and Chingachgook kill many Hurons, but do not catch Magua, who escapes to his Huron village with Alice and Cora, and is pursued by David.

The band divides up, with Heyward and Hawkeye going undercover to rescue Alice from the Hurons, and with Hawkeye then returning to rescue Uncas, who has been captured by the Hurons as well. Cora, who has been kept in a neighboring village of Delawares in an attempt, by Magua, to assuage tensions between these two tribes, still refuses to marry Magua. The Delaware patriarch, named Tamenund, states that Cora is Magua's rightful prisoner, and that she must marry Magua. But Tamenund also rules that the Delawares have no quarrel with Uncas, who is descended from the Delaware line, or with Uncas's friends Hawkeye, Heyward, and Alice.

After Tamenund permits Magua and Cora to leave the Delaware village in peace, Uncas leads Hawkeye, Heyward, and a group of Delawares in a final fight with Magua. An angry Huron kills Cora after she refuses, finally, to marry Magua, an angry Magua kills Uncas, and Hawkeye, using his rifle **Kildeer**, kills Magua. The novel ends with a joint funeral service for Cora and Uncas, attended by Chingachgook, Hawkeye, Heyward, Alice, and Munro, in which native and colonial cultures are blended in their dual sadness over the young people's deaths. Tamenund states that the Mohican line of warriors has ended, since Uncas was Chingachgook's only son.

CHARACTERS

MAJOR CHARACTERS

Hawkeye – Also known as Natty Bumppo and La Longue Carabine, Hawkeye is a white man who has lived with Uncas and Chingachgook, "the last of the Mohicans" in the New York forests, for many years. Hawkeye fights with the Mohicans on the side of the English, against the French and their "Mingo" (or Iroquois) allies. At the end of the novel, after witnessing Magua's killing of Uncas, Hawkeye shoots and kills Magua. Hawkeye considers himself a brother of Chingachgook's, despite their different ancestries, and therefore treats Uncas with the love and care reserved for a son. Hawkeye refers to himself as a "**man without a cross**," meaning he observes no Christian religion, and sees himself as existing between the Native American and European cultures of the New World.

Uncas – Truly the last of the Mohican warriors, as he is the only son of Chingachgook, Uncas is devoted to his father and to Hawkeye, and fights with great valor against the Mingos and the French. Uncas dies in pursuit of Magua, at the end of the novel, and is not able to carry Cora safely back to her father, Colonel Munro. But Uncas is celebrated by the Delawares (of whom the Mohicans are a sub-tribe) as a great and powerful warrior, who will be treated as such in the "hunting grounds" of the afterlife.

Chingachgook – Uncas's father, Chingachgook is a stoic and skilled warrior, and a close friend of Hawkeye's. Chingachgook must watch over the funeral of his son at the close of the novel,

and he celebrates his son's life, even as he recognizes that the Mohican tribe of northern New York will end with him.

Duncan Heyward – A Major in the "Royal American" (English) army, Duncan fights against the French and their Mingo allies. At the beginning of the novel, he is tasked with escorting Cora and Alice Munro from Fort William Henry to Fort Edward, and the adventures that occur along the way, including numerous run-ins with Magua, set the stage for the later drama of the novel.

Magua – The novel's antagonist, and a high-ranking Huron warrior (itself a subset of the Mingo, or Iroquois, tribes), Magua wishes to defeat the English and Mohican / Delaware forces, and also to take Cora, Munro's dark-haired older daughter, back with him to his "wigwam," as his wife. Magua is portrayed as caring more about amassing power and gaining influence than about honor, as he has a history of switching alliances in whatever way is most beneficial to him, which fits with his nickname *Le Renard Subtil* ("The Wily Fox"). He also has a long memory for any slight he has received, and is focused on Cora to redress wrongs he feels he has been dealt by Colonel Munro. After numerous attempts to kidnap Cora, Magua is eventually killed by Hawkeye, but not before Cora is killed by another Huron, and Magua kills Uncas.

Cora Munro – The older of Colonel Munro's two daughters, with dark hair and a strong, courageous disposition, Cora is the daughter of Munro's first wife, herself of a partly West Indian line. It is strongly implied that Uncas falls in love, in however chaste a fashion, with Cora, and Uncas fights to defend Cora from Magua. Cora, for her part, seems much more sympathetic to the Native Americans in general than other white characters in the novel. Cora is killed by another Huron during Magua's attempt to take her back to his wigwam.

Colonel Munro – Commander of Fort William Henry, near Lake George, the English Colonel Munro is the father of Alice and Cora, and the head of a doomed attempt to resist the siege led by Montcalm, commander of the French forces in the French and Indian War. Munro is later reunited with his daughter Alice, and gives Heyward his blessing for their impending marriage. But Munro also mourns his daughter Cora, of whom he was particularly fond.

David Gamut – A psalmodist, or singer and teacher of hymns, David Gamut meets with Heyward, Alice, and Cora on the initial trip from Fort Edward to Fort William Henry. Although Gamut has never fired a weapon and considers himself a pacifist, he manages to survive as a Huron captive for much of the novel, and is unhurt in the major skirmish that ends the book.

Marquis de Montcalm – Head of the French forces in the siege of Fort William Henry, Montcalm is considered, by English and French alike, a just and noble soldier. However, this assessment comes into doubt after Munro, and other English soldiers, believe Montcalm does not do enough to prevent the Mingo slaughter of innocents during the Massacre at Fort William Henry, after a supposed truce is signed between the English and French.

Tamenund – Patriarch of the Native American Delaware village neighboring the Huron village, in the second half of the novel, Tamenund orders that Cora be taken off by Magua, since she is "rightly" Magua's prisoner. Tamenund also orders that Hawkeye, Alice, and Heyward be set free, as the Delaware have no quarrel with Uncas or his friends.

MINOR CHARACTERS

Alice Munro – Munro's younger daughter, Alice has fair hair and is of a more nervous, less courageous disposition. Her mother was an English noblewoman, and the second of Munro's wives. Alice becomes engaged to Heyward at the end of the novel, though she greatly mourns her sister Cora's death.

General Webb – Commander of Fort Edward, Webb refuses to send reinforcements to help defend the English Fort William Henry, thus causing Munro to have to surrender to Montcalm, and leading, indirectly, to the massacre there that nearly kills all the members of Heyward's and Hawkeye's band.

THEMES

In LitCharts literature guides, each theme gets its own color-coded icon. These icons make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. If you don't have a color printer, you can still use the icons to track themes in black and white.

"SAVAGERY," CIVILIZATION, AND THE FRONTIER

Last of the Mohicans is a study of two societies forced into contact in the forests of upstate New York. The first is "European" society, itself divided into the French and the English settlers and their armies. The other society is that of Native Americans, referred to in the text as natives, "savages," or as Indians. Native society is then divided into many tribal alliances. Thus the novel takes up what was considered the standard division of the American colonies, into "civilized" white settlers, French or English, and "uncivilized" Natives from all tribes. Fenimore Cooper seems to acknowledge that there are differences between native society and that of Europe, but he rejects the simple idea that natives are uncultured and Europeans alone possess culture.

The activity of the novel serves to bring together members of each of these groups, either in peace or warfare. Hawkeye (also called Natty Bumppo, "La Longue Carabine") is friends with Uncas and Chingachgook, two representatives of the Mohican

tribe who have long been cut off from their native lands and people. Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook come into contact, early on, with Duncan Heyward, Cora and Alice Munro, and David Gamut, a singer, when this group is traveling between English forts. Hawkeye and the two Mohicans go on to protect this group in their various scrapes, battles, and intrigues throughout the novel. Opposed to this collection of English and native characters, primarily, is Magua, himself of Huron stock, but a warrior-chief who has played with tribal alliances in order increase his power in the region. Magua allies with the French and the "Mingos" for much of the novel.

The novel proposes that the "frontier" zone, existing at the edge of "European" America, is a meeting between native and European cultures. This "frontier" is then recreated, in human terms, in the interactions between the English, the French, and the natives allied to both. In particular, "frontier" culture is embodied by Hawkeye, who believes that his actions, his style of battle, are those of the native peoples of the region, but who also knows that he is a "pale-face." Hawkeye often states that he is a "**man without a cross**," meaning that he has disregarded his European / Christian heritage for a space between the worlds of Europe and the natives.

Throughout the novel, the customs of the Europeans and the natives are described; these systems are merged, at the end, in the twin funerals of Uncas and Cora. Cora is buried in the manner of "her people," and Uncas is left to be mourned by his father in the Mohican style. This final sequence indicates that Fenimore Cooper envisions the interactions between Europeans and natives as occurring between two cultural systems. In other words, Fenimore Cooper does not feel that Europeans have come to the Americas simply to give the natives culture (because the natives purportedly "lack culture entirely). Instead, in Fenimore Cooper's rendering, native and European societies share a number of common customs: religious systems; systems of honor; male-female divisions of labor; and practices for remembrance of the dead.

ESCAPE, PURSUIT, AND RESCUE

The structure of the novel's action is that of escape, pursuit, and rescue, in which Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook, and sometimes Heyward, engage in a back and forth with Magua, alternately rescuing and losing Cora and Alice. These complex sequences of escape, pursuit, and rescue serve several purposes in the novel. First, they are necessary components of the "frontier adventure novel," of which *Last of the Mohicans* is perhaps the primary example. In this form of the adventure yarn, tension is maintained primarily by the peril of its main characters, and by the defeat of a mortal enemy—in this case, Magua.

Second, they underscore the difficulties of life in the American colonies at this point in their history. Many societies, native and European, converged on a relatively small space in the middle of the eighteenth century, hoping to control its vast resources. The dangers of Hawkeye, Heyward, and the rest of the group are dangers many in this region faced—though perhaps not in such dramatic and sustained fashion.

Third, this structure of escape and rescue allows for a great deal of emotional impact when certain characters are *not* saved—namely, Uncas and Cora, the representatives of "native" and "European" society. By imperiling most of the lives detailed in the novel, Fenimore Cooper highlights the continued skill of Hawkeye, the luck of Heyward, and, ultimately, the misfortune suffered by the young Mohican warrior and by Munro's courageous daughter.

GENDER ROLES AND GENDER EXPECTATIONS

The Last of the Mohicans also takes up different understandings of the role of men and women in European and native societies. Cora (and, to a lesser extent, Alice) is a three-dimensional character, one possessed of courage and ingenuity in the face of danger. But the demands placed on her life are those typical of an eighteenth-century woman. Generally speaking, both British and French forces believe that war is to be fought by men and among men, and that "women and children" should not be involved in battle in any way. Thus Heyward conveys Cora and Alice from Fort Edward to Fort William Henry at the start of the novel, hoping to keep them out of harm's way. But Native American customs regarding the involvement of women in battle are different, in two ways: first, women in native cultures participate more openly and centrally in the rituals that precede battle, and in preparations for warriors; and women are treated, in Fenimore Cooper's rendering of native custom, as reasonable targets for battle, especially as regards the capture of women and the holding of them for ransom.

Thus Magua demands at several times in the novel that, in order to save her sister and family, Cora abandon her European heritage (which is in fact biracial, as Cora's ancestor is a native of the West Indies) and become his wife. To the British, the notion of Cora marrying a native is abhorrent and "unnatural," and to Magua, the capture of Cora is an important sign of victory in battle—Cora is, therefore, his "prize."

There is also a broader distinction made between "male" and "female" conduct. Both native and European societies have particular conceptions of acceptable male and female behavior. In particular, in native society, among the Mingos and the Delawares, it is considered a high insult for a warrior to be compared to a woman. This might happen for any of a number of reasons, but would include leaving a battle before killing all one's enemies, or the showing of mercy. On the other hand, European society obeys a chivalric set of principles regarding male-female relations: in other words, male soldiers are

expected to give everything, even their lives, to protect women. Ultimately, it is the "horrific" idea of Magua capturing and marrying Cora that provokes Hawkeye and the rest of the group to follow Magua and kill him. At this climactic point of the novel, Cora officially states she would rather die than marry Magua, and though Magua hesitates in killing Cora, a confederate of his does. Cora therefore maintains her "purity," and Magua shows that, for him, Cora is the ultimate token of greatness—a wife "taken" from her European society and forcibly removed to native society.

THE NATURAL WORLD

The Last of the Mohicans is set against a backdrop of immense beauty, wildness, and strangeness, especially for Europeans who are not accustomed to vast expanses of "unsettled" land. The natural features of upstate New York, described by Fenimore Cooper, serve several purposes in the novel. First, the caves, ledges, mountains, streams, and paths of the New York woods are essential elements of the battle-plans of the natives and Europeans. War cannot be fought, there, as it was in Europe—in long lines, from which soldiers marched in unison. Instead, battle in the rugged forests is mostly a guerilla affair, with both natives and Europeans hiding behind objects and using the "element of surprise" to overwhelm their foes. Those who can make better use of the natural environment tend to have the upper hand in battle.

Second, there is an argument made throughout the text that natives like Uncas and Chingachgook have a better sense of the natural world than do the Europeans—that they are somehow "closer" to nature. To a certain extent, this is true, as both the Mohicans demonstrate a mastery of the woods that enables a good deal of scouting, and certain military victories. But Hawkeye has also acquired this knowledge after living among the natives for a great many years—indicating that it is a cultural heritage of the native population, rather than a "biological" one, that allows them to live close to the environment around them.

Third, Fenimore Cooper writes from the position of a newly-formed American society, one that has passed through the French and Indian Wars, its own Revolutionary War with Britain, and a War of 1812 that again challenged American supremacy over its own soil. Fenimore Cooper understands, even in 1826, that the world of Uncas and Chingachgook is rapidly disappearing—that the towns near Lake George and Lake Champlain will only grow in size, adding more settlers, and causing the deforestation of a region that was once so densely wooded, one could barely see through it. The author is not an environmentalist—he does not argue for the preservation of the woods as such—but his description of the natural beauty, the lakes and rivers and forests, of the region are inflected by a longing for those "wilder" times, when America was not even a country, and when its settlement required heroic efforts on the part of both Americans and natives.

LOYALTY AND TREACHERY

Finally, *The Last of the Mohicans* is a meditation on the nature of loyalty—what it means to be loyal or disloyal, and the consequences of loyalty and treachery as played out in battle. On the one hand stand Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook—men and warriors who are loyal to their own, whoever that group is said to be. Although the latter three do not start out the novel in defense of Heyward, Cora, Alice, David, and Munro, they go on, as the novel progresses, to serve them even to the point of death. Heyward's morality occasionally differs slightly both from the natives' and from Heyward's, but all these characters act on principles of trust and honesty that are unbroken throughout the novel. (One might wonder whether this kind of clear-cut moral "goodness" is realistic, but it does seem to be the case in Fenimore Cooper's conception). Magua, on the other hand, will stop at nothing to further his own interests. He leaves the tribe of his birth for a time, pretending to be a scout sympathetic to the British, then turns back to the Mingos and their allies, in the aid of the French. His common aim, simply, is to gain as much power and influence as possible, and to "acquire" Cora as his wife, partially as an act of vengeance against her father, Colonel Munro, whom Magua believed mistreated him.

There is, too, the larger scale of alliances and broken promises that govern the conflict between the British and the French for control of the region. As the massacre of Fort William Henry is described, it was passively permitted by Montcalm, who, in Fenimore Cooper's telling, went on to be slain in a later battle of the French and Indian War, and who died a "hero." But Fenimore Cooper believes, largely, that the French are of changeable opinions, and that the British, from which American rebels came (including Washington), were more stalwart, upright, and loyal. Hawkeye, in this sense, remains a central figure of the novel. Although he is not, perhaps, its hero—that position is reserved for Uncas—he is its most notable, most boisterous personage, and he is a man whose confidence is hard-won. But when Hawkeye commits to a cause—that of the Mohicans, or of Heyward's band—he does so for life, and he lists the Mingos as his lifelong enemies. This immutable derring-do seems much prized by Fenimore Cooper, and is celebrated throughout the novel as exemplifying the best of "frontier" morality.

SYMBOLS

Symbols appear in **teal text** throughout the Summary and Analysis sections of this LitChart.

"A MAN WITHOUT A CROSS"

Hawkeye, also known as Natty Bumppo, often refers to himself as a "man without a cross" throughout *The Last of the Mohicans*. Hawkeye was born to white English parents, but has lived much of his life among the Delawares (specifically, the Mohicans) of northern New York state. Because Hawkeye does not believe in a Christian god, and perhaps also because he has not been accepted into the white Christian (English and/or French) communities of North America, Bumppo considers himself between European and native society. Thus, as a "man without a cross," Hawkeye feels allegiance both to Uncas and Chingachgook, on the one hand, and to Heyward, Munro, Alice, and Cora, on the other, without fully committing himself to either side.

"KILDEER"

Numerous characters in the novel, though in not so obvious a manner, also find themselves existing between divided worlds, with one foot in each. Cora, for her part, is descended partly from West Indian parentage, and Munro, her father, attributes her courage and "fiery" personality to this. Heyward and Uncas become friends once Uncas saves Heyward's life from Magua's attack, early in the novel. Their friendship spans the distinctions between their two cultures. And, at the end of the novel, all members of the band participate in the joint funeral of Uncas and Cora, showing that the two cultures, between which Hawkeye claims to live, have actually grown closer together throughout the course of the narrative.

QUOTES

Note: all page numbers for the quotes below refer to the Bantam Classics edition of *The Last of the Mohicans* published in 1982.

Chapter 1 Quotes

It was a feature peculiar to the colonial wars of North America, that the toils and dangers of the wilderness were to be encountered before the adverse hosts could meet.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 1

Explanation and Analysis

The Last of the Mohicans takes place in a colonial United States that is marked by a complex set of conflicts and loyalties - between English settlers, French settlers, Native American communities living on the North American continent for centuries, and various subsets of individuals identifying with more than one of these groups. As Cooper notes, the loyalties between people in this complex network could shift over time, and they were in fact quite dangerous.

But the woods themselves, the areas of thick vegetation, streams, rocks, and gorges in what is now upstate New York - these posed a unique danger to those unaccustomed to traveling through them and living in them. The natural world is one of the main characters in *The Last of the Mohicans* - it is a vibrant and dynamic setting, against which the action and drama of the plot takes place. And it is a setting as murderous and dangerous as any conflict with any enemy in wartime.

Chapter 2 Quotes

Should we distrust the man because his manners are not our manners, and that his skin is dark?

Related Characters: Cora Munro (speaker), Magua

Related Themes:

Page Number: 14

Explanation and Analysis

Cora asks her family whether they distrust Magua simply because he's a Native American - a representative of a community that the white colonial settlers, as a rule, tend not to understand. As it turns out, later in the text, the other members of the Munro family have good reason to distrust Magua - as he will turn treacherous and take the side of the French. But this cannot be known early in the novel, and Cora wonders, genuinely, why her family necessarily attributes bad qualities to a Native American guide.

The political and social lessons of *The Last of the Mohicans* are complex - rather progressive for their time, but, viewed in a contemporary light, still somewhat shocking in their insistence on essential differences between Native American and "European" ways of life. Part of the novel's purpose, as Cooper understood it, was to describe the political and social interactions of colonial America in their fullness, without ascribing absolute good or bad to one side or another. This, despite the fact that Cooper does tend to favor the "Royal American," or English colonial, side.

Chapter 3 Quotes

❝ These Indians know the nature of the woods, as it might be by instinct!

Related Characters: Hawkeye (speaker), Uncas, Chingachgook

Related Themes:

Page Number: 29

Explanation and Analysis

One of the novel's most interesting characters, Hawkeye acts as a mediator between the English, French, Mohican, and Mingo (Iroquois) tribes. Hawkeye trusts that his Native American comrades understand not just how to move through the woods - how not to get lost - but how to find, attack, and defeat an enemy using the woods as a part of an offensive or defensive strategy. Hawkeye has learned a great deal about fighting, and about loyalty and man's relationship to nature, from his Mohican friends, including Chingachgook and Uncas.

The flip side of Hawkeye's comment, however - and something that would only be apparent to a contemporary reader - is the equation of Native American culture and attitudes with a more "natural," or "purer" way of life. Hawkeye really does believe that his Native American friends understand the woods more thoroughly than he ever could. But other characters in the text, especially English and French soldiers, do tend to believe that Native Americans are closer to nature because they have yet to be "civilized" by European culture. Cooper's novel describes the richness of native cultures as a subtle method of critiquing this European belief of the "noble savage."

Chapter 4 Quotes

❝ A Huron! They are a thievish race, nor do I care by whom they are adopted; you can never make anything of them but skulks and vagabonds.

Related Characters: Hawkeye (speaker), Magua

Related Themes:

Page Number: 34

Explanation and Analysis

In direct contrast to the quotation above, Hawkeye does not universally approve of Native American behavior, nor does he believe that all native tribes are equally trustworthy or loyal to their friends. Indeed, Hawkeye argues that the Huron are more than willing to break covenants, to do whatever it is that might advance their own interests, even if at the expense of those around them whom they used to call friends. Hawkeye is characteristically final on this point - he does not leave room for any subtlety. If Magua is indeed a Huron, then it is no surprise, for Hawkeye, that Magua has turned traitor and left the group he was supposed to guide through the woods. This, for Hawkeye, is exactly what a Huron in Magua's position would do.

Hawkeye's beliefs, then, are a subset of a recurring theme in the novel - the judgment of a single person by the perceived actions or attitudes of a group to which that person belongs. (Essentially, a textbook edition of racial stereotyping.)

Chapter 5 Quotes

❝ What is to be done? . . . Desert me not, for God's sake! Remain to defend those I escort, and freely name your own reward!

Related Characters: Duncan Heyward (speaker), Hawkeye

Related Themes:

Page Number: 44

Explanation and Analysis

Duncan Heyward admits that he does not know, and cannot learn, the "ways" of the forest - certainly not in the time remaining to him, after they have been abandoned in the woods by Magua. Hawkeye therefore arrives just in the nick of time, and clearly demonstrates that he understands the paths, and hiding places, in those woods. Heyward has no trouble asking Hawkeye for this kind of help.

The idea of "escorting" is an important one in the novel. Heyward is tasked with moving Cora and Alice through the forest because, it is assumed, they are utterly incapable of this kind of activity themselves. This is a commonly-held belief among the Europeans (English and French) in the New World - that men must make the colonies safe and civilized for the women who travel with them. But as will become apparent later in the text, Huron and Iroquois tribes do not feel the same way - women in those societies take on much more prominent roles outside the home.

Chapter 6 Quotes

❝ Are we quite safe in this cavern? Is there no danger of surprise? A single armed man at its entrance, would hold us at his mercy.

Related Characters: Duncan Heyward (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 54

Explanation and Analysis

Heyward seems to recognize that the cave in which they hide themselves could prove to be a burden to the group - it could trap them, since it protects them so thoroughly from the outside world and has so very few points of escape. For his part, Heyward tends to critique the plans that have been laid out by others - namely, Hawkeye and Chingachgook - rather than offering plans himself.

This, because Heyward understands tactics from the perspective of the European military - in which soldiers march in rows and wear brightly-colored uniforms, identifying them as belonging to one or another side. The kind of warfare practiced in the forests of the New World, in which opponents hide among the trees and wait to strike, is utterly foreign to Heyward - he does not understand the mechanics of how this kind of warfare might operate in reality.

Chapter 8 Quotes

He [Uncas] saved my life in the coolest and readiest manner, and he has made a friend who never will require to be reminded of the debt he owes.

Related Characters: Duncan Heyward (speaker), Uncas

Related Themes:

Page Number: 77

Explanation and Analysis

This shows another aspect of Uncas' and Heyward's personality. Uncas helped Heyward, in part, because he trusts Hawkeye, who has agreed to help Heyward and his party. Uncas thus agreed to be loyal to Heyward, and to provide support for that group in any way possible. Uncas' loyalty to friends is unquestioned.

Heyward, then, also demonstrates his loyalty here - although characteristically he does so not only by embodying it in action, but by proclaiming it in a direct speech to the group assembled. He argues that, because Uncas has saved his life, he is forever indebted to Uncas, and will do what he can to support him. This, for Heyward, would be the natural outcome of this kind of demonstration of honor - the kind of loyalty that is announced and firmly established in the social codes of the Old World as well as in the New. But Cooper makes plain that Uncas has already possessed and demonstrated this loyalty, without having to announce it so publicly.

Chapter 9 Quotes

"Isle of Wight!" 'Tis a brave tune, and set to solemn words; let it be sung with meet respect!

Related Characters: David Gamut (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 90

Explanation and Analysis

David Gamut is an intriguing character in the novel, as he does not participate in the romantic couplings nor in the dramatic action - he is not a fighter, and indeed calls himself a pacifist, a man who would not, for any reason, take up arms against another man. What David does, and does supremely well, is sing, and at this stage in the novel he sings to boost morale, and, perhaps, to remind the others that they are still free to use their voices - indeed, to lift them to God.

The singing of these songs, and the espousing of Christian faith, brings to the fore another of Cooper's themes - the interaction of Christian religions and native religions in the woods of the New World. Cooper, in seeking to describe the Huron and Iroquois tribes, tries to present their traditions and customs as fully as he knows how. And, here, he demonstrates that Christian devotion can be displayed anywhere, at any time - even if by a character who is, by all accounts, something of the novel's comic relief.

Chapter 10 Quotes

Yes, the pale-faces are prattling women! They have two words for each thing, while a redskin will make the sound of his voice speak for him.

Related Characters: Magua (speaker), Duncan Heyward

Related Themes:

Page Number: 99

Explanation and Analysis

Magua believes, just as heartily as some of the European

characters believe, that there are essential differences between Native Americans and Europeans. One of those differences, for Magua, has to do with patterns of speech. Europeans, he charges, use a lot of words to say very little - they use language not to tell the truth but to speak around it, to obfuscate it - in a word, to lie. By contrast, the Native Americans believe that a voice ought to be used when someone has something true, and direct, to say. Magua does not believe in the use of language for deception.

But, of course, both Heyward and Magua practice deception throughout the novel, and so Magua's distinction is a theoretical rather than an actual one. Heyward attempts to use his cunning to build up Magua's vanity and therefore save his friends, and Magua, at the beginning of the novel, pretended to be a scout favorable to Heyward and company before abandoning them.

Chapter 11 Quotes

❝ And am I answerable that thoughtless and unprincipled men exist, whose shades of countenance may resemble mine?

Related Characters: Cora Munro (speaker), Magua

Related Themes:

Page Number: 111

Explanation and Analysis

At this point in the novel, Magua is trying to make the case that Cora ought to live with him as his wife. In doing this, he in part degrades the honor and valor of the European men among whom Cora has lived. Cora assertively tells Magua, in this quotation, that of course there are bad European men, as there are bad people in all communities in the world - she therefore echoes the sentiments she shares earlier in the text, in which she critiques those who (rightly, it turns out) would not trust Magua. But the fact that Magua is a deceptive person and of Iroquois heritage is a coincidence, and Cora wishes to show that bad people, and good people, exist in all communities on the face of the earth, and have since time immemorial. What is more important, for Cora, is the courage one demonstrates in thinking for himself or herself - and not the affiliation that person proclaims, as a source of "honor."

Chapter 12 Quotes

❝ Well done for the Delawares! Victory to the Mohican! A finishing blow from a man without a cross will never tell against his honor, nor rob him of his right to the scalp.

Related Characters: Hawkeye (speaker)

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 124

Explanation and Analysis

Hawkeye proclaims that he's a "man without a cross" for several reasons. First, he does so as a way of separating himself from what he sees as the bad soldiering habits of the English and French troops, who do not know how to fight in the woods. Hawkeye, for his part, has lived in the woods for many years, and knows them, he claims, as well as any native. He is also a "man without a cross" because he does not subscribe to the articles of faith of any Christian tradition - he does not feel himself bound to its codes. For many of his European peers, this is a somewhat shocking statement, for many of the colonists believe that Christian Europe has come to the forests of the New World to "civilize" those who already live there. But Hawkeye makes plain that he does not feel this to be the case - that he wishes to live in the woods largely as the natives do, while maintaining his independence from either strictly colonial or strictly native rules.

Chapter 14 Quotes

❝ Hold! 'Tis she! God has restored me to my children! Throw open the sally-port; to the field; . . . pull not a trigger, lest ye kill my lambs!

Related Characters: Colonel Munro (speaker), Cora Munro, Alice Munro

Related Themes:

Page Number: 161

Explanation and Analysis

Colonel Munro has believed, till now, that Cora and Alice will not be "returned" to him - that, in sending them out ahead of the colonists with Magua, he has accidentally committed them to their doom. His relief in finding Cora and Alice again is unmatched at any other point in the novel. He feels that he has bucked fate.

Again, this scene makes plain the relationship of men and women, fathers and daughters, in the "European" communities of the novel. Whereas gender roles among the native communities are far more equal, though by no means

perfectly equal, among the Europeans the men fight and protect the women, who mostly do what the men around them ask them to do. It is an arrangement that situates power and authority in the hands of men, not women, and that runs contrary to the spirit of independence possessed by people like Hawkeye, who do not ascribe entirely either to European or to native principles.

Chapter 15 Quotes

❝ Ah! thou truant! thou recreant knight! He who abandons his damsels in the very lists! Here we have been days, nay, ages, expecting you at our feet, imploring mercy and forgetfulness of your craven backsliding . . . .
You know that Alice means our thanks and our blessings . . . .

Related Characters: Alice Munro, Cora Munro (speaker), Duncan Heyward

Related Themes:

Page Number: 166

Explanation and Analysis

This is a small moment of levity in a novel where levity is not all that common. Cora and Alice make fun, gently, of Duncan for his seriousness, and for his desire only to fight the French from the fort, and not to spend time with them within it.

Cooper's characterizations, as those of Cora and Alice and Heyward here, tend to be schematic, or organized broadly according to theme and type. Heyward is a good, loyal, but somewhat inflexible soldier, who never sways from his devotion. Cora is a passionate defender of the rights of all people, and especially of the rights of Native Americans, whom she believes to be treated unjustly by Europeans. And Alice is a very kind and (as is implied repeatedly) "pure" person, whose honor has in no way been besmirched. Cooper, in this scene, therefore disrupts these types somewhat, without abandoning them - and these three will stay true to their general characters throughout the rest of the novel.

Chapter 16 Quotes

❝ I will meet the Frenchman, and that without fear or delay; promptly, sir, as becomes a servant of my royal master.

Related Characters: Colonel Munro (speaker), Marquis de Montcalm

Related Themes:

Page Number: 181

Explanation and Analysis

Although Munro does not like the French at all - he, indeed, believes them to be untrustworthy - he accepts the rules of warfare and agrees to speak with them from outside the fort, before the French lay siege to it. He does this because he believes that the rules of warfare apply in all contexts, and to all people - whether they be European or native, and whether the conflict take place on European or on American soil. For Munro, these rules are unshakeable, and an important part of being honorable and "civilized." The rules of war, he might say, are what the fighting of wars are about - defending the principles upon which a society is constructed.

But, of course, not all characters in the novel feel this way. Heyward does, but he is more or less the exception. Of course Magua does not believe in maintaining the covenants he enters into - and Hawkeye, for his part, takes an in-between view, believing that loyalty need not be absolutely in the way of Munro, but that it must nevertheless define a man - that a man, in Hawkeye's mind, must make his own principles and stick to them.

Chapter 19 Quotes

❝ It is impossible to describe the music of their language, while thus engaged in laughter and endearments, in such a way as to render it intelligible to those whose ears have never listened to its melody.

Related Themes:

Page Number: 228

Explanation and Analysis

The narrator here argues that the Native languages, in particular the Huron language, have a music to them that is all their own - that they are somehow closer to music itself than they are to language. Instrumental music, of course, has no words - it has only notes, sounds. It is abstract, and it does not carry meaning - it is closer to the noise that surrounds one in the world.

Thus, as the narrator is ostensibly praising the language of the Hurons, and arguing for its beauty, the narrator is also noting that this language is somehow more "organic" and closer to nature - and therefore less civilized, less

technically developed, than a European language. Although the narrator seems to want genuinely to support and advocate for the Native American tribes he describes, he occasionally does so in a manner that would, today, be considered (at best) ethnically condescending. For European languages, though musical, are also described as languages - as ways of conveying thought, or speech, or literature.

Chapter 20 Quotes

❝ I little like that smoke, which you may see worming up along the rock above the canoe. my life on it, other eyes than ours see it, and know its meaning. Well, words will not mend the matter, and it is time that we were doing.

Related Characters: Hawkeye (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 241

Explanation and Analysis

The latter half of the novel contains a great many chases, like this one, in which Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook make way, with Heyward and Munro, through the woods to find Magua, Alice, and Cora. Indeed, as this passage indicates, the structure of the novel is one of traces and the spotting of traces - smoke and those who see it, caves and those who hide in them. The warfare of Europe, which took place on cleared battlefields, has been exchanged for the warfare of the New World, in which men follow one another in a complex game of cat and mouse.

Hawkeye, of course, is immensely skilled at this game - skilled as no European is, and more skilled than a great many of the Natives whom he fights. Hawkeye's knowledge of the woods, the caves, the smoke that comes from the caves is unparalleled. All Heyward and Munro can do is listen to Hawkeye as he helps them toward Cora and Alice.

Chapter 21 Quotes

❝ We must get down to it, Sagamore, beginning at the spring, and going over the ground by inches. The Huron shall never brag in his tribe that he has a foot which leaves no print.

Related Characters: Hawkeye (speaker), Chingachgook

Related Themes:

Page Number: 247

Explanation and Analysis

Hawkeye's relationship with Chingachgook is one of absolute friendship and total dedication. They also work together, European and Mohican, to defeat the Iroquois, who have been their enemies since time immemorial. One of the specific traits of the Iroquois, as it repeated in the lore of the region, is that they leave no trace when they walk - that there would be no prints, therefore, with which to trace Magua. But Hawkeye does not believe this to be true - and, indeed, believes that he and Chingachgook themselves can move through the forests without a trace.

This, then, adds to the theme of tracking that wends its way throughout the novel. One only knows another's trail by viewing what that person has left behind - a footprint, a bent twig, the disturbance of a few leaves. Cooper makes Hawkeye almost superhumanly adept at reading these traces - far more so than any European who has ever lived in what is now upstate New York.

Chapter 22 Quotes

❝ Little be the praise to such worm as I. But, though the power of psalmody was suspended in the terrible business of that field of blood through which we passed, it has recovered its influence even over the soul of the heathen, and I am suffered to go and come at will.

Related Characters: David Gamut (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 257

Explanation and Analysis

David announces to Heyward, who has found him unattended in the woods, that David is permitted to come and go across enemy lines as he pleases. David attributes this to the power of God's songs that he sings - he believes that the beauty, and, perhaps, the the religious truth of these songs is enough to turn even the coldest heart toward him - thus he is allowed to move across the battlefield without being hurt.

One might, of course, interpret David's immunity another way. Because he very clearly is of no threat to either side, and is uninterested in any of the comings and goings of warfare, he is allowed passage as a harmless neutral actor. There is nothing he can do to hurt anyone. Thus David, despite his pride in his musical ability, might be protected

simply because no one on either side feels that he could possibly be a threat.

Chapter 23 Quotes

❝ When an Indian chief comes among his white fathers, he lays aside his buffalo robe, to carry the shirt that is offered him. My brothers have given me paint, and I wear it.

Related Characters: Duncan Heyward (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 271

Explanation and Analysis

Gradually throughout the novel, Heyward has come to realize that there are some customs of the native tribes that he is to obey, not simply because they would be politically or militarily expedient, but because he has come to genuinely feel loyal to his native friends. One of these is depicted here, in which Heyward conceals himself using the paint of the Hurons, just as, he argues, a Huron chief would dress like a European as a symbol of his communion with that group.

What Heyward cannot know, however, is just how one-way this transaction will be in the years after the novel. That is, natives will be asked to dress "like Europeans" for a great many years, whereas it will be far less common for Europeans genuinely to inhabit the cultural traditions of the native tribes they decimate across what becomes the United States. Cooper seems, gently, to understand that exchange between Native Americans and Europeans will be affected by this inequality going forward.

Chapter 25 Quotes

❝ Heyward, give me the sacred presence and the holy sanction of that parent [Munro] before you urge me further.

Related Characters: Alice Munro (speaker), Duncan Heyward, Colonel Munro

Related Themes:

Page Number: 300

Explanation and Analysis

Alice is in love with Heyward, and has indeed been waiting for some time for Heyward to propose marriage to her. But Alice, in her "purity" (as it is described throughout the novel), wishes to do everything properly, including getting permission from her father, Colonel Munro, before Heyward can take her hand in marriage. Cooper has clearly set up Alice as a paragon of virtue in the text - as a character who cannot be corrupted, whose purity is so obvious as to be beyond question.

What is more troubling is Cora's relative lack of virtue, despite nothing that Cora has done. Cooper's narrator instead avers that Cora has, in her temperament (perhaps deriving from her mother, a native of the West Indies) a tendency toward a more tempestuous life. Cora, then, although she commits no crime, winds up in situations in which her virtue is continually tested - and Alice, coincidentally, does not. This is another aspect of Cooper's "schematic," or broadly theme-based, somewhat flat depiction of certain characters.

Chapter 26 Quotes

❝ Even so, I will abide in the place of the Delaware. Bravely and generously has he battled in my behalf; and this, and more, will I dare in his service.

Related Characters: David Gamut (speaker), Uncas

Related Themes:

Page Number: 316

Explanation and Analysis

Again, David is a foil to Hawkeye, a man who is allowed to pass between European and native communities. But David is allowed to do this not because of his knowledge both of native and of European customs, nor out of any inherent military skill. Instead, it is the opposite - David can do this because he knows so little about the ways of warfare, and because his only skills are musical - he is not considered to be a threat at all to those he lives among.

David bears this situation with grace, and during his time in captivity he uses to his advantage, playing his music and generally enjoying getting to know native ways of life. David is an innocent in every sense - a character untouched by so much of the drama of the novel unfolding around him, who persists in his ways, living according to his lights, and doing so without any regret or reservation.

Chapter 27 Quotes

❝ Several of the [Huron] chiefs had proposed deep and treacherous schemes to surprise the Delawares, and, by gaining possession of their camp, to recover their prisoners by the same blow; for all agreed that their honor, their interests, and the peace and happiness of their dead countrymen, imperiously required them speedily to immolate some victims to their revenge.

Related Themes:

Related Symbols:

Page Number: 326

Explanation and Analysis

Cooper goes out of his way in this sectio, to outline different forms of justice and retribution. In the Christian context, as espoused by, say, Alice and David Gamut, one ought not to retaliate against one's enemies, but instead to "turn the other cheek," as Jesus argues in the Gospels. This, of course, is not the method of retaliation used by Europeans in actual battle conditions - but it is the high, indeed almost impossible, bar set by the Christian tradition for how to deal with one's enemies. Cooper, by contrast, shows that, at least in some native communities, there are obligations toward revenge, toward the hurting of victims in an "eye for an eye" relationship to atone for the damage inflicted on one's own side. Cooper does not argue that one or another form of revenge is better - he merely sho2s the differences between conceptions of battle, bravery, and obligation in the skirmishes of the New World.

Chapter 29 Quotes

❝ If the Great Spirit gave different tongues to his red children, it was that all animals might understand them. Some He placed among the snows, with their cousin the bear. Some he placed near the setting sun, on the road to the happy hunting-grounds. Some on the lands around the great fresh waters; but to his greatest, and most beloved, he gave the sands of the salt lake.

Related Characters: Magua (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 350

Explanation and Analysis

Magua gives a short sermon on the nature of native tribes, and the manner by which they came to be the way they are. Cooper demonstrates that Magua is very knowledgeable in the ways of his own culture, and in the history that culture has established for itself - in the art of telling one's own story, and the story of one's people.

Cooper, importantly, does not necessarily intrude on the narrative here, to argue that Magua's story of the history of his tribe is incorrect. Cooper refrains from implying that the European methods of history, or warfare, or city-building are naturally superior to the native methods. He also does not argue that native methods themselves were closer to nature, or more originally wonderful. Cooper instead manages (usually) to show what is good and ill about both native and European societies - and to show how these societies interacted when they met in the forests of upstate New York.

Chapter 32 Quotes

❝ The pale-faces are dogs! The Delawares women! Magua leaves them on the rocks, for the crows!

Related Characters: Magua (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 393

Explanation and Analysis

Even as Magua begins to realize that he is doomed, that he will not be able to survive the final battle, he nevertheless refuses to back down, or to state that in fact he has a new-found respect for his adversaries. Instead, he states that Europeans cannot be trusted, that the Delawares are cowardly in battle (as implied by the insult "women"), and that he will not even allow their wounded bodies proper treatment or burial. This bitterness Magua takes to the very end - he will not allow for any compromise between his own tribe and his enemies.

Magua, then, is one example of the nature of enmity in the novel - but he is not the only example. Although Heyward and Hawkeye, each in his own way, are committed to defending themselves and their friends, they do not believe that their enemies are absolutely evil - nor do they think it is their only job on earth to defeat them. In his hatred of his enemies, Magua is in a realm unto himself - his hatred knows no bounds, and it is this hatred that drives him into the final battle and, eventually, kills him.

Chapter 33 Quotes

❝ Go, children of the Lenape, the anger of the Manitou is not done. Why should Tamenund stay? The pale-faces are masters of the earth, and the time of the redmen has not yet come again. My day has been too long. In the morning I saw the sons of Unamis [the Mohicans] 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.

Related Characters: Tamenund (speaker)

Related Themes:

Page Number: 407

Explanation and Analysis

This is a very sad moment in the text, and the closing speech. Tamenund has a hard time believing that Uncas is really gone, that he has been brought low in battle - and that, therefore, the "last of the Mohicans," the final warrior of a great line of warriors, will not live to have his own family. Tamenund laments that this is so, and wonders what might have been had Uncas survived.

But Tamenund also notes that the Europeans, for good or for ill, have taken over most of the native lands, and will continue to. In this the leader understands, with great sadness, the path in which history appears to be leading - he neither accepts it nor fights against it, but merely states that it is so. It is a bitter ending to the tale - but Tamenund also notes that Uncas' bravery was so noteworthy during his life, and that that bravery will be remembered, too - along with the tragic state of affairs that caused Uncas' to be taken from his community in the prime of his youth.

SUMMARY AND ANALYSIS

The color-coded icons under each analysis entry make it easy to track where the themes occur most prominently throughout the work. Each icon corresponds to one of the themes explained in the Themes section of this LitChart.

CHAPTER 1

The narrator begins the novel by describing the landscape of the region "between the head waters of the Hudson and the adjacent lakes." This is the region in which the novel takes place, in upstate New York, 1757, during the Seven Years' War, also called the French and Indian War. In this conflict, England and its Native American allies fought with France and its Native American allies for control of "the American colonies," which included parts of what is now the northeast US and Canada. It is the third year of this conflict, and English colonists and soldiers are worried that the long-term war with the French and natives cannot be won.

This geographic location will feature prominently in the remainder of the novel. Much of the characters' struggle, as they attempt to sort through the numerous native and colonial alliances of the Seven Years' War, will be played out against the backdrop of a difficult, remote terrain, filled with trees, caverns, streams, and lakes. These are areas very few men—native or white—travel frequently, and larges swaths of this country have not yet even been fully mapped.

As the novel opens, a small group of soldiers are marching from Fort Edward, south of Lake George, to Fort William Henry, just adjacent to that lake, in order to aid Munro, the officer in charge of Fort William Henry, which lies close to the French lines. Munro wonders whether a larger detachment will later be sent by General Webb, stationed at Fort Edward, to support his fort against possible French attack. An "ungainly man" is described, waiting in front of Webb's quarters, quoting Biblical verses to describe a beautiful horse he sees tied off nearby.

The primary conflict of the book revolves around the possibility that Heyward, leader of this small band, will be able to convey Munro's two daughters to another English fort, Fort William Henry, which is then subjected to a famous siege. Cooper has here blended both a fictional plot with a real-life, historical event—the siege of the fort—in order to create his "historical fiction."

A young officer exits the quarters of General Webb with two young women, named Alice and Cora, whom he is to escort through the wilderness, on horseback, from Fort Edward to Fort William Henry. The officer, named Duncan Heyward, promises Webb and the two young women that he will get them to Fort William Henry safely. They mount their horses and proceed behind an "Indian runner," or guide, whom the narrator does not yet name, but who is described as being "swarthy" looking, perhaps untrustworthy. The band of Heyward, Alice, and Cora depart on horseback, with the runner staking out the trail ahead.

One of the ingenious tricks of the novel's plot is that Magua, the book's antagonist, is placed, from the beginning, in close proximity to Heyward, Alice, and Cora, three of the novel's heroes. From the beginning, too, there is a tension between Magua and the rest of the band, and this is later explained, by Hawkeye, as having derived from the fact that Magua was born a Mingo but is not supposedly faithful to the Delawares. Hawkeye believes this kind of switching of loyalties to be "unmanly."

CHAPTER 2

Alice, the fair-haired of the two young women, asks Heyward whether the runner up ahead is not a "specter" of the forest, and if he is a loyal native. Heyward replies that the runner was born of "the Canadas" (meaning a native tribe loyal to the French), but since came to serve the Mohawks, a tribe allied to the English. Heyward continues, saying that the runner was once embroiled in a "strange accident" involving Alice and Cora's father (who is revealed to be Munro, the officer in charge of Fort William Henry)—but Heyward tries to soothe Alice's worries, saying the runner is loyal to their cause, and that Alice need not fear.

Here, Heyward introduces the concept that the natives are "ghosts" of their own forests—because they can move through them quietly—and that natives therefore have a kind of special spiritual connection to the lands of upstate New York. The English and French, though they have managed to seize control of a good deal of this land, are not believed, either by natives or whites, to have this same religious connection to the land, and some, like Hawkeye, lament this fact.

Cora, her dark-haired sister, asks Alice whether she mistrusts the runner simply because his "skin is dark." Alice also wonders why they are not traveling with the troops, in their caravan, to the fort; but Heyward counters that it is safer to travel in the backwoods with the runner, as the soldiers' caravan will be a large target for French-allied natives looking for "scalps." Heyward, Alice, and Cora spot the "ungainly man" from the previous chapter, on the same trail, and wonder what he might be doing on their path to the fort.

A modern reader would understandably question Fenimore Cooper's methods of female character development, as Alice's and Cora's personalities seem to be embodied, somewhat, in their hair colors, and in the manner by which their temperaments are described. Cora, of a "dark" complexion, has a "stormy and courageous" personality, whereas Alice, with "fair" hair, is more shy, less outwardly courageous, less inclined to battle.

The "ungainly man" says that he, too, is traveling to Fort William Henry, and figured he would take the same path as Heyward and the two young women, because there is safety in numbers. This man says that he is a psalmodist, or instructor in religious songs, by training, and Alice seems very happy to have this singing man in their midst, although Cora is less pleased.

David Gamut, who appears at the beginning of the novel as a rather one-dimensional, religious and pacifist character, becomes, by the novel's end, a character of great personal courage, who maintains his beliefs and manages to help the band get out of their numerous scrapes.

The psalmodist sings one of his hymns, and Alice is delighted to hear it, although Heyward stops him and says that they ought to travel silently, so as not to stir up natives in the forest and endanger themselves. Alice gently teases Heyward, showing that she is particularly friendly towards him, and asks Heyward to sing at some point in the future. The group, now four on horseback plus the runner, continue heading along the path to Fort William Henry.

Alice's and Heyward's love story is more or less ordained from the start. Heyward is a hero among the English soldiers, and his bravery is painted by Fenimore Cooper in unequivocal terms. Alice seems almost magnetically drawn to this form of bravery, and recognizes in Heyward a mirror of the characteristics her father, Munro, exhibits.

CHAPTER 3

The narrator pauses in his description of Heyward's party, and turns to a white man and a Mohican native talking, in a native language, not far off, by a stream. The white man is dressed in a scout's attire and carries a long rifle; the native, called Chingachgook, is wearing only a small strip of cloth, and he carries a tomahawk and knife. The white scout, called Hawkeye (or Natty Bumppo), and Chingachgook talk of their family histories; Chingachgook relates that his tribe, the Mohicans, were the most powerful of the Americas, but Dutch settlers in New York gave them "fire water" (alcohol), and took over much of their land, driving Chingachgook and his family into the forests.

Although Chingachgook does not speak much in the novel, he is one of its moral centers, a character around whom a great deal of action revolves. Chingachgook is the father of Uncas, the novel's native hero, and Chingachgook is considered, by Hawkeye and other natives, to be a man of great personal loyalty and bravery. Chingachgook's story explains how the noble Mohicans were corrupted by the arrival of the white men, and gestures at the way the New World is changing as European powers gain sway.

Chingachgook also states that the Mohicans have long been enemies of the Iroquois, also known as the Maquas or Mingos. Another native named Uncas, son of Chingachgook, arrives, and asks Hawkeye whether he will help Uncas and Chingachgook fight the Maquas and the French, their allies, the next day. Hawkeye says that he will, but that they must eat first and bed down for the night, to have strength for battle. Uncas kills a deer with his bow and arrow, and after he does so, Hawkeye and the Mohicans hear the "hooves of white horses"—Heyward's party, drawing near in the forest.

Another refrain in the novel will be the kind of patience that Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook exhibit when faced with difficult decisions. It appears to be a native custom that, once one must decide what to do, one has a meal, talks, and sleeps on the decision, then resolves to a course of action early the next morning. This means that none of these three warriors tend to act impulsively, or to make decisions they then regret later.

CHAPTER 4

Heyward approaches Hawkeye, and says that his party has become lost in the woods—that their guide, the runner, has lost his way. Hawkeye wonders how this is possible, and Heyward explains that the runner was born a Huron (one of the "Mingo" tribes), but has lately fallen in with the Mohawks, allied to the English. Hawkeye wonders aloud whether a Mingo can ever "change his colors," but Heyward states that they are looking for safe passage to Fort William Henry, and asks whether Hawkeye knows the way to that fort, or back to Fort Edward, where they started.

Another of the novel's "refrains" is the idea that different characters or tribes can have numerous different names, some given, some descriptive. The Mingos are also called the Maquas or the Iroquois. Hawkeye is also called "Natty Bumppo," and, in later novels, "The Deerslayer." These compounded names represent the many linguistic influences in this part of North America.

Hawkeye asks to see the runner, who is standing back behind the psalmodist (named David) and Alice and Cora; Hawkeye, after looking the runner over, returns to Heyward and says to him, in confidence, that a "Mingo is a Mingo," and that the runner cannot be trusted. Heyward admits to Hawkeye, also out of earshot of the rest of the party, that he was worried the runner might have been leading them intentionally astray.

Hawkeye and Heyward discuss another idea, which states that the differences between the English and the French, and between different native tribes, derive from innate differences between the characteristics in these groups. In other words, the dislike between Hurons and Delawares is "natural," a result of deep-seated cultural tendencies.

Hawkeye tells Heyward to busy the runner, whose name is Magua, or Le Renard Subtil, in conversation, so that he (Hawkeye), Chingachgook, and Uncas can devise a plan either to capture him or scare him off. Hawkeye talks to Magua, saying that Magua must have gotten lost; when Magua hears that Hawkeye might consent to lead the group to Fort William Henry, Magua says that he will leave them, and go off into the woods himself until he reaches that fort.

Magua's treachery throughout the novel is discussed by nearly all the book's major characters. Magua has managed, as a Huron, to live among the Delawares and the English for some time, without causing the Hurons to distrust him, or at least not very much—as evidenced later on. Magua is perhaps the novel's most intelligent, most convincing and persuasive character.

Heyward, however, asks Magua whether that is a wise move—leaving the party—since Magua has been promised a reward by Munro, commander of Fort William Henry and father to Alice and Cora, if the whole party is delivered safely to the fort. Heyward tells Magua to sit and eat while the group rests for the night, and prepares to travel in a body for the fort the next day. Grudgingly, Magua mumbles to himself that Europeans are "dogs to their women," and sits as if to eat his food.

Another concept that Magua will introduce throughout—the idea that European men's activities are determined by the desires of "their" women, and not the other way around. In native cultures, as evidenced throughout the book, warriors tend to make policy and female natives serve those policies, whereas the idea that Heyward would escort two women to another fort seems, to Magua, an enormous waste of resources.

Magua then approaches Heyward, who has dismounted from his horse, showing Heyward that the corn in his "food wallet" is dry. Heyward and Magua stand face to face, and as Heyward reaches out to grab Magua (to capture him and bind him, out of a sense of Magua's treachery), Magua eludes his grasp and darts off into the forest. Chingachgook and Uncas, who have been lying in wait for Magua, emerge from the forest in pursuit of him, and a shot rings out from Hawkeye's rifle as Magua runs into the deep woods.

The first of Magua's many escapes. Like Magua's intellectual cunning, he is also described, by the narrator and by other characters, as being incredibly physically evasive, quick, and strong. Magua is, therefore, a major warrior among the Hurons, and is recognized for his prowess on the battlefield, as well as in the policy-making councils of the tribe.

CHAPTER 5

Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye attempt to track Magua for a moment, but then return to Heyward, who has been frozen in his spot, wondering if Magua will get away. Heyward criticizes Hawkeye for refusing to pursue Magua any father; Hawkeye returns that there would be no way they could capture a "Mingo" in these forests—so schooled is he in the arts of avoiding detection—and that the camp would be better served to move itself along the path and avoid other Maquas and their French allies.

Hawkeye understands that, to track Magua in the forest, one would need either inspired luck or a major miscue by the Huron, in order to find him. Natives of both the Huron and Delaware tribes are extremely adept at guerilla warfare in the forests, and they also have a close, lived relationship to the many trails that run through it. Only a small number of whites, like Hawkeye, also possess this knowledge.

Heyward, with desperation in his voice as the night falls, asks Hawkeye if he and his two Mohican friends will serve as guides to convey the group to Fort William Henry. Hawkeye consults with Uncas and Chingachgook, and they agree they will help Heyward's party, and that they require no monetary reward for it, as it is the right thing to do to protect these innocents from Iroquois attack. Hawkeye merely asks Heyward never to reveal to anyone the hiding place Hawkeye is about to show the party; Heyward agrees.

The request that brings the "group" or "band" together. Heyward understands that he is now embroiled in an intrigue involving the native tribes of the region, and that his expertise as a white soldier will not necessarily ensure the safety of Cora, Alice, and David, as they proceed to the fort. It is a sign of Hawkeye's and the Mohicans' honor that they are so quickly willing to help this group of people in need.

Uncas and Chingachgook state, however, that the group must get rid of their horses. In particular, David's colt is too large for the journey, and so Uncas, without delay, slits its throat and dumps it in the stream—much to David's chagrin, although Hawkeye and Chingachgook agree that it is the right strategy to save the party. The other horses are led along with the group, as they approach a stream where the Mohicans' canoe has been hidden. Alice and Cora are seated in the canoe, and Hawkeye, Heyward, and the Mohicans, with David walking along, use poles to drag the canoe upstream, toward a hiding place hidden in the rocks ahead.

Hawkeye, Chingachgook, and Uncas waste no time, here, in making plans. One of the biggest dangers of the forest is giving away one's position, either with footprints or loud noise. A horse will leave both behind, and therefore a large horse, like David's cannot be taken along. David will spend several chapters lamenting the death of his horse, but he finally seems to recognize, after witnessing the Hurons in battle, the nature and strength of the foe he is to confront, and agrees that Hawkeye made the right decision regarding the colt.

They reach a set of rocky outcroppings near a large series of waterfalls, called Glenn's Falls. Here, Alice and Cora are helped out of the canoe, which is stowed in hiding along with the horses; and Heyward is delighted to fight a series of hiding places in the rocks where the group can avoid detection by the Iroquois.

Many of the place-names mentioned in this part of the novel are now towns in upstate New York, including Glenn's Falls, which is not far away from Saratoga Springs, one of the region's cultural centers.

While the group is getting situated along the banks, in preparation for retiring to the hiding place, Heyward asks Hawkeye if the Delawares (a larger tribe closely related to the Mohicans) and Mohicans have given up fighting altogether, as Heyward has heard. Hawkeye, indignant, says that the Delawares and Mohicans still fight, as Uncas and Chingachgook show, and that the Maquas only want others to believe that the Mohicans, "like women," have abandoned the arts of war. Near the outcropping, David sings a psalm of mourning for his dead colt, and the group prepares to enter the cave used by Hawkeye and the Mohicans as a hideout.

Another refrain in the novel is the idea that the Mohicans and Delawares, because they have been driven from the eastern shores of the continent by Europeans earlier in the 1700s, are no longer a war-like people. The Hurons, perhaps, have perpetuated this illusion, but Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook do all they can to disprove it. This also shows the close relationship between native culture and colonial policies in the 18th century.

CHAPTER 6

Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook direct Heyward, David, Alice, and Cora into the caverns near the waterfalls, showing them that, once inside, the caverns extend in numerous dark passages, closed off with heavy blankets. There is another exit on the opposite side of the rock, too, in case Hawkeye and his companions should become trapped during a Mingo attack. Hawkeye and the Mohicans are clearly pleased with the security of their stronghold, and Heyward and Alice comment on the "nobility" of the features and behaviors of the Mohicans. Cora, for her part, listens to them speak of the natives' ties to "nature," and wonders aloud whether the color of Uncas' and Chingachgook's skin matters at all. Alice and Heyward fall silent at this rebuke.

One of two important caves used over the course of the novel. The other is in the Huron village, in the second half of the book; Alice is kept prisoner there by Magua, and Hawkeye and Heyward find her inside and rescue her. Cora, in this section, again asks if skin color and family background matter at all in the determination of a person's worth: it is noteworthy that Fenimore Cooper seems sympathetic to Cora's position, and upholds the inherent nobility both of white and native heroes—of, for example, both Heyward and Uncas.

The group eats, and all appear satisfied that they have alluded any enemies for the night. Hawkeye talks to David and asks about his employment; on hearing that David is a singer, Hawkeye wonders aloud whether David can do anything "useful," and David claims that he has no physical trade, nor has he ever used a "deadly weapon," and he is proud of his pacifism. Hawkeye remarks again on the strangeness of David's occupation, and David sings a long, slow song as the group finishes eating and prepares for bed.

Another running joke in the novel: David's lack of "manly vocation." David's singing will become useful for the band, however, once Alice and Cora have been captured, since the Hurons do not consider David to be a warrior or a combatant, and therefore allow him free passage into and out of the village. David will then provide information about the village to Hawkeye and Heyward.

Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook go off to another part of the cave to sleep, and Heyward, after inspecting the caverns again, tells Cora and Alice that they are safe till morning. Alice regrets aloud that she and her sister wanted so dearly to see their father, Munro, at Fort William Henry, wondering if they are not causing the man to worry. But Heyward repeats the promise he made to Munro, to convey Alice and Cora safely, and says that they will figure out a plan the next day to retrace their steps to Fort Edward, and perhaps begin the journey to the other fort again. But just as they finish their conversation, Hawkeye enters their part of the cave, with a look of distress on his face—he has heard a strange cry outside, and worries that there might be Mingos or French in the woods nearby.

It almost seems as though Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook, who know the woods well, are permanently on watch when the band beds down for the night to sleep—this occurs later on in the text as well. Although Fenimore Cooper believes that Heyward and Munro themselves are noble warriors, he seems to reserve a special place for the heroic efforts of Hawkeye and the Mohicans, whose personal strength, courage, and ability to go long stretches without sleep are qualities necessary for anyone who wishes to survive in the forests of upstate New York.

CHAPTER 7

Hawkeye says to Heyward and his band that he (Hawkeye) has never heard such a cry as this, although Hawkeye has lived among the natives for many years, and is therefore a "**man without a cross**" (or a man who is neither native nor Christian). The band leaves the caverns for a moment to try to determine what is making the crying sound, and where it is located. Finally, Duncan realizes that the cry is coming from the band's frightened horses, hidden by the banks of the stream; Heyward believes the horses are being frightened by wolves or other beasts of the forests, and Hawkeye sends Uncas down to the horses to try to shoo away whatever has gathered nearby.

Hawkeye is a "man without a cross" for several reasons. He is a white man who has lived among the natives for much of his life, and he has therefore abandoned some characteristics of his English background, including the Christian faith. But Hawkeye can never fully integrate into native society, either, despite his vast knowledge of the forest and of the Delaware language. Therefore, he is a "man without a cross" not simply because he has renounced Christianity, but because he lives between native and English culture.

Uncas returns, having quieted the horses, and the group waits for several hours. After Cora and Alice and David sleep for a time, Heyward and Hawkeye awaken them and say it is time to move the band onward. At this, however, a sound of yells cuts through the forest, as do shots from rifles brandished by the Iroquois: the band is under siege. Hawkeye tells the group to lie down and take cover, but David, shocked by the violent screams, stands bolt upright and is grazed by a bullet, which sends him into shock.

This is the first of many scrapes David gets himself into, mostly because he has no concept of battle and has never fought in the field. David could have just as easily been killed at this point in the narrative, but his survival, and continued survival, through Huron battles and a massacre, indicates that he is either very lucky or somehow adept at avoiding a violent end.

Hawkeye drags David back down into the cave, and seeing that David's wound is only superficial, promises the band that the singer will improve after his shock wears off. Heyward tells Cora and Alice to hide with David in the cavern; Heyward joins Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook in lowering himself on the rocks, hoping to take aim at the Maquas as they return to battle again.

Although Heyward, Alice, Cora, and David are greatly surprised by this battle with the Mingos, Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook seemed to be expecting it. Part of these three warriors' skill in the field derives from their inability to be caught unprepared by an enemy attack.

Hawkeye and Heyward spot five Mingos drifting down the river on wooden logs; one Mingo falls over the cascade and is drowned (Heyward briefly consider trying to help that Mingo, only to be stopped by Hawkeye). The other four Mingos prepare to attack the position held by the band. When the Mingos do charge, Hawkeye fires upon them with his long rifle, and two fall. Another Mingo attacks Heyward, and the two fall into hand-to-hand combat. The Mingo appears to have Heyward pinned, but just as the Mingo is about to stab Heyward, Uncas stabs the warrior from behind, saving Heyward's life. Heyward, Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook then scamper back up the rocks to the shelter of the cavern, having killed all four Mingos.

Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook recognize that, in order to defeat the Mingos and protect one's safety, one must actually kill all Mingos present. The Hurons, who themselves are greatly skilled warriors, tend to escape and regroup their forces, in preparation for a counter-attack; Magua does this numerous times throughout the narrative. Heyward, Alice, and Cora find the ritual of scalping unseemly, but Hawkeye recognizes that scalping is a physical reminder of the enemy's inability to continue fighting.

CHAPTER 8

Once Heyward, Hawkeye, and the Mohicans have regrouped on the rocks, a new volley of fire from the Maquas tears through the forest, nearly grazing Heyward. Heyward tells Hawkeye and Uncas that Uncas is responsible for saving his (Heyward's) life, and that Heyward will be forever grateful to Uncas. Hawkeye says that Uncas has also saved his own skin several times in the forest, and that Uncas is a noble warrior. The band realizes that some of the shots have been fired from far up in a tree, and turning their gaze skyward, they see a Mingo shooting on them from high in the branches.

There are now at least two "blood ties" that exist within the band. Hawkeye is faithful to Uncas because of other scrapes the two have gotten into, in the forests of upstate New York. And Heyward, whose life Uncas has just saved, now feels that he, too, is indebted to Uncas's bravery. Uncas, in this sense, is a warrior everyone in the novel respects, even those Hurons who fight against him.

Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye attempt to aim at the Mingo in the tree, and Hawkeye, after taking a moment to level his long rifle, which he calls the **Kildeer**, hits the Mingo and nearly knocks him off the branch. The Mingo struggles to maintain his hold, and Hawkeye, feeling compassion for him and hoping to spare him the long fall to earth, shoots him again and kills him out of mercy. Hawkeye then sends Uncas down to the canoe to recover the big horn of powder Hawkeye has left there, so the band can keep up its fight against the Maquas.

Initially, Hawkeye makes it seem that it is not useful to waste a bullet on the man in the tree, since he will fall to his death anyway, but he eventually shoots him and hastens that fate. Thus, although Hawkeye talks of his ability to kill without remorse, and to care nothing for his enemies, he nevertheless shows here a kind of compassion that separates his activities in war from those of, say, Magua.

But Uncas and Hawkeye, leaning over the rocks, see a Huron (one of the sub-tribes of the Maquas) stealing Hawkeye's canoe and the powder, and floating down the river; the band is now left without any means of fighting off the Maquas. Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye go into a state of mourning, one that Cooper seems to think "peculiar" to the native races, in which they gloat over the number of Maquas they have killed, and say that, now that they are finished, they will die as warriors, surrounded by the Maquas on the rocky outcropping.

As evidenced here, codes of "gentlemanly" conduct vary from native to English populations. Heyward would not brag about the number of soldiers he has just killed in battle, considering this to be in poor taste. But for Uncas and Chingachgook, this rehearsal of the battle after the fact is an important tribal custom, and cements one's reputation among members of one's own village.

Heyward and Cora, however, dispute that the band has to die at all. Cora tells Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook to float downstream and carry word back to Ford Edward, asking for reinforcements to find the remainder of the party; in the meantime, the women, David, and Heyward will surrender to the Mingos and hope they can be saved by Hawkeye and the Mohicans later on. Hawkeye consults with the Mohicans and decides that this plan is a reasonable one. Before Hawkeye leaves, he tells the Munro daughters to make their path through the woods known, after their capture—by breaking twigs and otherwise signaling their location—so that Hawkeye and the Mohicans can find the band after sending word to Fort Edward.

Another motif in the novel: the idea that characters make a trail through the woods simply by walking or altering the plant-life, logs, and rocks that are in their path. Here, Hawkeye hopes that Cora will do more of this, in order to make especially obvious the direction in which the band has fled. But later on, Uncas and Chingachgook will track Magua, David, Alice, and Cora using this same method, in order to kill Magua and rescue the two young women.

Hawkeye and Chingachgook float downstream, although Uncas is loath to follow—he appears to feel devoted to Cora, but Cora says he must go with the other two and hope to save the band later on. Cora then turns to Heyward telling him that he, too, ought to float downstream and leave Alice, Cora, and David to be captured. But Heyward, looking at Alice, to whom he has shown increasing signs of love and devotion, says that it would be a "fate worse than death" to leave the sisters. They go back inside the cavern and wait for the Mingos' advance.

From the outside, and according to an English code of conduct, the retreat of Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook seems ungentlemanly, even cowardly. But as will be shown later, this strategic retreat on the part of the "natives" will aid the band, and will prove an effective method of killing those Mingos who are pursuing the group through the woods.

CHAPTER 9

Heyward looks around, into the beauty of the forest, as the Mingos have pulled back and Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye have now floated downstream. Heyward sees only the birds and trees of the forest, and does not see any sign of the Mingos. He goes to David, who has been in and out of consciousness after the grazing shot he received. David sings a psalm to himself— Heyward allows it, because the sound of the rushing waterfall drowns out David's voice—and Heyward talks with Cora and Alice, who seem prepared, and bravely so, for the renewed assault of the Mingos.

An important if subtle scene in the novel. Heyward spends a bit of time, even in the aftermath of the terrible fear the band has experienced, to take in the natural beauty of their particular location, near Glenn's Falls. Heyward also learns, as the novel progresses, that Uncas's, Hawkeye's, and Chingachgook's reverence for nature is at once spiritual and practical: native religions are centered on the woods, and the woods can be a dangerous, complicated place to live one's life. Heyward's reverence for nature can also be seen as Fenimore Cooper's reverence, as Cooper wrote the novel at a time when the "taming" of this wilderness was well underway and so the novel captured a wildness he wanted to preserve.

Just then, Heyward hears another splitting cry in the woods—the Maquas are remounting their assault of the cavern. The band gathers together in the cavern, silently, so as to avoid detection, and the Maquas walk on the nearby rocks, raising cries at the sight of their fallen comrades, killed by Heyward, Hawkeye, and Uncas. The Maquas also repeat the name "La Longue Carabine," given to Hawkeye, as he is one of their greatest enemies, and a combatant whom they have fought in these woods for years.

The name "La Longue Carabine," or "The Long Rifle," is both a term of derision and a term of respect for the natives. On the one hand, they seem to state that Hawkeye's success in battle derives solely from his powerful weapon, rather than his cunning. But the natives also recognize just how powerful and courageous a foe Hawkeye can be.

The group of Maquas moves on, however, and Heyward tells Cora, Alice, and David that they are saved—they have escaped detection. Just then, however, Magua sees the cavern and, poking his head into it, past the blanket blocking its entrance, he catches sight of Heyward. Heyward, in a flourish, fires his pistol in an attempt to kill Magua, but the shot misses, and the sound is so loud as to alert the remaining Maquas to the location of the band in the cavern. The Maquas storm inside and take the band captive, with Magua, Le Renard Subtil, at their head.

The first scene of capture in the novel. Here, the capture occurs more or less as anticipated, as Uncas, Hawkeye, and Chingachgook retreated strategically, hoping that the Hurons would allow the prisoners to live long enough for the three warriors to attempt a rescue mission. Although Magua is an untrustworthy man, he is nevertheless bound to native customs, which afford a great deal of respect to prisoners.

CHAPTER 10

Heyward is surprised by the conduct of the Mingos, who do not "disturb" him or Alice and Cora and David, but instead roam through the caverns in search of Hawkeye. Magua tells Heyward that the Mingos desire to find Hawkeye above all else; Magua also complains that Hawkeye, Uncas, and Heyward himself conspired to kill him (Magua) through treachery earlier that day, and Heyward holds himself back from accusing Magua of the original treachery, that of leading the party through the woods so that they might stray intentionally into Mingo territory.

Heyward wants to accuse Magua of being what, in fact, he actually was: a spy for the Hurons among the English soldiers. But Heyward also recognizes that aggravating Magua would do more harm than good for the band, while captured. It seems that, even in this early stage of the novel, Magua seeks to find and destroy Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye above all others.

Magua asks Heyward where Hawkeye went, and Heyward replies that Hawkeye and the two Mohicans floated downstream to give word of the band's capture at the hands of the Mingos. Magua tells the other Hurons that the three have escaped, and they raise cries of anger and frustration at this news. Some of the Hurons shoot menacing glances at the women, and Heyward, moving over to protect them, has his arms bound by several Mingos. Then Magua calls over the warriors, and they seem to be discussing plans to move the prisoners back toward Fort Edward.

Again, Magua demonstrates that his quarrel is primarily with the scout and the two Mohicans. Magua also does not seem, at this juncture, especially interested in Alice and Cora and David—they are, simply, white prisoners he can use for leverage, in order to entice Hawkeye to return and fight him in battle. Heyward, as a representative of the English, is considered a foe of Magua's from the start.

The Mingos herd Heyward, David, and the two women down the rocky outcropping into a large canoe. The canoe floats some of the way down the river, guided by the Mingos, and when they all reach the place where the band's horses were kept, some of the Mingos split off and take Heyward's horse into the forest. The rest stay with Magua and the prisoners as they continue to float down the river. Some of the Mingos walk alongside the canoe in the stream, holding the reins of their horses

Another motif in the novel: the idea of travel by water. Natives seem to prize the practice because it allows one not to leave tracks through the forest, which can be traced by a capable scout like Hawkeye, or by natives like Uncas and Chingachgook. Travel by canoe up-river, though occasionally arduous, also means that men, women, and children do not have to walk long distances through the difficult wooded terrain.

En route, Heyward attempts to play on Magua's vanity by congratulating him for his cunning displayed over the previous day. Heyward implies that, if Magua turns his sympathies back toward the English—if he double-crosses the Mingos—then Munro would guarantee Magua a large reward upon the safe return of the Munro daughters to Fort William Henry. Magua seems gratified by Heyward's words, and says that he will consider the plan, and that Heyward ought to fall silent until Magua has made his decision.

Heyward attempts, here, to use cunning to counter the Magua's famous cunning. Magua's fatal flaw is his pride—he believes that he is a better warrior than Uncas, a greater chief than Chingachgook, a greater scout than Hawkeye—and Heyward, sensing this pride, does all he can to try to convince Magua that, perhaps, life would be better on the English side. But Magua eventually rejects this offer.

The party switches from canoe onto horseback, with Magua and the other warriors leading the prisoners through the forest. Cora remembers Hawkeye's injunction to mark the path as they go along, and she bends the bough of a sumach tree to make their path clear. After several hours riding on horseback behind Magua, the group makes its way to the top of a high clearing, where they dismount to rest.

Another demonstration of Cora's presence of mind in the forest. Although Alice has more difficulty following Hawkeye's instructions, Cora recognizes that, if she does not leave a path through the woods, the three warriors might never find the band, and Magua might kill them all.

CHAPTER 11

At the top of the clearing, some of the Hurons sit and eat, and Heyward goes to Magua, telling him that perhaps they ought to hurry on to Fort William Henry, if Magua is to receive his "reward" (which exists only in Heyward's promising) for the return of the young women. Magua, however, snorts at Heyward's request, saying they will get to the fort eventually; in the meantime, he asks to speak with Cora alone. Heyward brings Cora over to Magua, and goes to sit with Alice, who is more or less in shock and exhausted from the day's ordeals.

The last of Heyward's attempts to bribe Magua. This is a motif in the novel: Heyward tries at numerous junctures to convince natives that he, Colonel. Munro, or General Webb will be able to repay the natives in order to free prisoners or gain the natives' trust. But Magua does not seek financial gain; rather, he hopes to take Cora for his wife, as revenge against Munro and to improve his social standing within his own village.

Magua begins telling Cora the story of his own life: his fellow Hurons were given "fire water" by the French, and many turned to violence and dissipation; Magua, for his part, wandered into the Mohawk camps near Fort Edward, and was eventually taken in as a guide to Munro and his men. Munro had a strict rule against natives drinking alcohol, and when Munro scented liquor on Magua's breath one day, Munro had Magua beaten for his misbehavior. Magua says that the "stings of this lash" hurt him more than other wounds obtained in battle. Cora, for her part, asks whether she is responsible for her father's harshness, and wonders aloud if Magua will lead them to safety or do some "evil" to them in the woods.

The story of Magua's life. Although Fenimore Cooper does little to flesh out this story later on in the text, it appears that Magua has taken Munro's actions very much to heart. While Munro, for his part, probably did not recognize that he was so thoroughly wounding Magua, though such an assumption can be seen as being rooted in a European sense of superiority to the Native Americans. But Fenimore Cooper here attempts to provide at least some motivation for Magua's cruelty toward members of the Munro family.

But Magua continues, saying that he wishes to take Cora for his wife, since his previous wife was "given to another chief" when Magua left the Hurons for the Mohawks. Cora expresses immediate disgust, asking how Magua could want to marry a woman who clearly does not love him. Magua says that he knew, when he received lashes on Munro's command, that he would exact vengeance one day by taking off one of the Munro daughters in marriage. Magua also states that, if Cora will marry him, the rest of the party are free to go. At this, Cora curses Magua, saying that she would never marry him, and would rather die; she then runs to Alice and the rest of the band, who sit clustered together, worried at the warriors' next move.

The manner of this revenge is marriage. It is implied that perhaps the greatest fear of any white colonial settler is the idea of intermarriage between white women and native men. On the other side, white men did in fact enter into sexual relationships with native women—this was perhaps quite common, well into the early years of the United States—but this commonplace did nothing to eradicate the fear of mixed families with native patriarchs. Here, Fenimore Cooper dramatizes Heyward's and Munro's anxiety that Cora might end up the wife of a native man.

Magua turns to the warriors and begins a rousing speech, extolling the warriors' power, the strength of the Hurons and the Maquas more generally. The warriors become greatly agitated, and appear to rise, brandishing their tomahawks. In a large group they run at the members of the band, but Heyward jumps in front of Alice and Cora, attempting to save them from the Hurons' violence. But the Hurons bind David, Alice, Cora, and Heyward each to their own trees, and the warriors prepare to sharpen bits of pine to stab and torture the band.

The first of many of Magua's speeches to his native men. It is not clear whether the warriors of Magua's tribe can read and write, but they are absolutely receptive to the oral traditions of rhetoric and persuasion that Magua employs in order to convince them of his plans of action. Here, Magua first flatters the warriors, making them seem courageous and powerful, in the face of minimal white opposition.

Magua curses Cora again, saying she believes she is too good for the "wigwam of Le Renard," but Cora, who has not revealed the nature of Magua's bargain to the band, says only that Magua is evil and a liar, but Alice and Heyward press her, asking the nature of Magua's bargain. Cora finally announces to the rest of the band that Magua would let them all go, if Cora would agree to marry him. She asks Alice and Heyward whether she ought to accede to his request or instead choose death for them all. After briefly contemplating this moral quandary, both Alice and Heyward tell Cora that it would be better to die, pure, than to go off in marriage with Magua.

Cora, quite tellingly, is unwilling to risk her honor unless she is absolutely sure that it would help Alice's and Heyward's cause—in that case, she is happy to help her sister and her future brother-in-law. But Heyward and Alice won't hear of this; as above, they are greatly afraid that Cora and the Munro family would "lose its honor" if Cora were to marry Magua, therefore Heyward and Alice are willing to die to prevent this outcome.

Magua, angered by Cora's final refusal, throws his tomahawk at the band, nearly slicing Alice—the tomahawk instead is lodged in the tree to which she is bound. Heyward, angered at this sight, bursts from the tree to which he is tied, and runs toward another Huron who is brandishing his knife at the party. Heyward falls into a wrestling match with this other Huron, and just when Heyward believes that the Huron has pinned him and is about to kill him, Heyward hears a rifle-crack and sees the Huron fall off him, dead.

A rescue begins. Here, the strategic retreat effected by Hawkeye, Chingachgook, and Uncas has proved useful, as it has caused Magua and the other Hurons to believe that the warriors will not return to defend the band. In native custom, these sorts of strategic retreat are commonplace, but Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook nevertheless maintain the element of surprise and annihilate nearly all their Huron foes.

CHAPTER 12

Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook storm into the clearing, determined to kill all the Mingos present. Heyward grabs the tomahawk thrown by the Huron, and he, Hawkeye, and the Mohicans beat and stab beat back and kill the Hurons. Chingachgook and Magua begin to wrestle, as Magua is the only Mingo left, but after Chingachgook appears to have the upper hand, he rises, and looks down at the apparently lifeless form of Magua. Just as Hawkeye is about to kill Magua with a final shot, however, Magua, who had been pretending to be unconscious, scampers up and runs down the clearing, out of the reach of the band.

Another instance of Magua's treachery. Magua's behavior—pretending that he has been killed or seriously wounded—is considered ignoble by Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye, who would not dream of deceiving their enemy in so cowardly a fashion. But, for Magua, survival is the most important goal, and so he escapes once again, to fight another day against the band, and Hawkeye and the Mohicans rescue Heyward, Alice, Cora, and David once more.

Uncas and Heyward rush to Cora and Alice, making sure they are all right—the young women cry out with joy that the band is saved, and Hawkeye unties David, who is similarly thankful. Uncas and Chingachgook then collect scalps from the dead Hurons. David begins giving praise to God, and wonders why the scout does not do the same, but Hawkeye counters that he is a "**man without a cross**," though thankful all the same for the band's survival and speedy recovery. Hawkeye says that he believes in a God-like spirit that "walks with him" in the forests and that lives in no book. David begins a psalm of praise, as Hawkeye walks away, "muttering to himself" that the Maquas might be able to hear them.

An important if short-lived conversation between David and Hawkeye. The two seem to understand that, although they have very different religious beliefs, and very different ideas about warfare, they are nevertheless united in their understanding of a higher power. This foreshadows another scene of common understanding between native and white religions (although, of course, Hawkeye is ethnically white), which occurs at the end of the novel, in the joint funeral service for Uncas and Cora.

Heyward, on their walk to a nearby watering hole, asks Hawkeye and the Mohicans how they came to save them. Hawkeye relates that, after their trip downriver, they waited by the Hudson to see if they could track the Hurons, and after hearing their cries (during Magua's rousing speech to the warriors), Hawkeye and the Mohicans believed the group to be close by. Uncas had seen the peculiar tracks of the young women's horses, and had noticed the branch broken by Cora, thus allowing Hawkeye and the Mohicans to locate the clearing; they then crawled through the leaves and surprised the Hurons.

As above, Cora's willingness to follow directions and mark her way through the woods, even at great personal risk, enabled Uncas, Hawkeye, and Chingachgook to track the band and have the final say, just as Magua was to execute his prisoners out of anger. Cora's courage is recognized by Hawkeye and Heyward, but she is given very little credit, in later scenes and during the larger village tribunals, for her bravery in times of crisis.

Hawkeye tells the band to drink of the spring near where they've stopped, and after a small bit of food, the group sets off with Hawkeye in the lead and the Mohicans in the rear, with the rest of the band in the middle. They head north, toward Fort William Henry, in the hopes of meeting up with Munro and his men there.

Once again, before the group moves on or makes any serious decisions, they stop, at Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye's request, have food, and plan their next move.

CHAPTER 13

Hawkeye leads the band through the forest, saying that there is a place up ahead they can camp for the night. The band comes upon a "block house," or abandoned forest outpost, that looks to be almost in ruins. Hawkeye tells Heyward the story of his defense of that block house, with the Mohicans, against Maquas some number of years ago. During a siege, Hawkeye and the Mohicans held off dozens of Maquas, then killed them and buried them on a nearby hill. Heyward asks Hawkeye if it isn't true that the Delawares and Mohicans once agreed to a peace treaty with the Dutch, and Hawkeye says this is not correct; the Dutch proclaimed such a treaty, but the Delawares never "abandoned their manhood" and gave up warfare in this way.

Heyward asks Hawkeye whether the legend about the Delawares (also known as the Lenapes, and of which the Mohicans are a sub-tribe) is true: namely, that the Delawares gave up fighting after signing treaties with the English and Dutch. Hawkeye is perhaps motivated by his own honor and vanity here, but, as evidenced in the preceding chapters, Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye are more than willing to do battle against the Hurons whenever necessary. It is therefore likely that this notion of Delaware "pacifism" is in fact a Huron invention.

Alice and Cora go inside the block house to sleep, and though Heyward wishes to keep watch during the night, Hawkeye says it would be better for Chingachgook and Uncas to do so, since they are accustomed to the "native" manner of stalking through the woods, and would be better prepared to find enemies in the night. Heyward relents, and the band, except for the Mohicans, sleeps, until they are awoken by Chingachgook early the next morning, with the moon still high in the sky. The band prepares to travel by moonlight to Fort William Henry.

Just as Uncas and Chingachgook stood watch when the band was first housed in the caverns near Glenn's Falls, here the two Mohicans believe that they are better equipped to spot encroaching natives than Heyward or Cora would be, and perhaps they are right. Nevertheless, it gives the sense that, without the protection of Uncas and Chingachgook and Hawkeye, the band would never make it through the woods at all.

As the band readies for travel, however, they hear footsteps not far off in the woods, and realize that a small group of Hurons, advance scouts from Montcalm's French army, are near the block house, examining it for traces of the English. The band retires to the block house, putting everything inside, including the horses. Although Heyward wants to fire on the Hurons as they approach, Hawkeye cautions him, saying they ought to wait and see what the Hurons do. As it turns out, the Hurons merely inspect the burial mounds; the Hurons then turn to leave, and the band, relieved, readies to depart once again. With the Hurons far in the other direction, the band leaves through the back of the block house, into the woods once more.

A close call. Hawkeye prizes this block house because of its remote location and its well-defended position, and here, Hawkeye also shows just how useful the block house can be as a position in which to fortify and hide. It is an indication of the dangers of the upstate New York woods that even a small hut, made of logs, is better than simply being outside, among the trees—but the constant threat of native attack, from all sides, requires that Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye maintain an unrelenting vigilance, even when bedding down for the night.

CHAPTER 14

The men of the band take off their moccasins and shoes and walk north in the shallow waters of a stream toward Fort William Henry. Alice and Cora follow on the riverbank—the men do this to avoid detection of their footprints as they travel. Hawkeye tells Heyward of some of the battles he has fought, on the English side against the French, in the frontier regions during the Seven Years' War. Just as Heyward is questioning Hawkeye about how many warriors he has slain in battle, the band hears someone approach, speaking French—the figure asks "Qui vive," meaning, roughly "who goes there."

Heyward's and Cora's ability to speak French, which will come in handy during these ensuing chapters, is perhaps the result of a noble birth and a good education. There is no evidence that Alice can speak French, nor Hawkeye, but in the former case, it is perhaps for a lack of bravery in the moment; and in the latter, Hawkeye never gives any indication that he has received formal schooling, though he has "apprenticed" in the woods among the natives for some time.

Luckily, however, Heyward speaks very good French, and tells the Frenchman, a soldier in the army, that he (Heyward) is conducting a group of prisoners along to Montcalm. Cora, also speaking French, seconds this story, and the French soldier permits them to pass. As they walk by, however, Chingachgook sneaks into the forest, finds the French soldier, quickly kills him and scalps him, returning to the band with the scalp, fresh, on his belt. Although many in the band, including Heyward, are shocked by this behavior, Hawkeye justifies it by saying the band is safer for it, and that, for a native, to kill in this way is not dishonorable, but rather the norm.

A perfect, if gruesome, example of native and white mores, side-by-side. Here, Heyward believes that they have evaded the Frenchman, and he thinks no more about that man. But Chingachgook believes it is both good policy to kill the French, always, and that it is more noble to do so and to take a scalp than to walk away in cowardly fashion. Hawkeye, ever the peacemaker between these two groups, claims that Heyward ought to praise Chingachgook for behaving according to this own native custom.

Hawkeye says they have two options for proceeding to the fort: they can send the Mohicans ahead, to kill Frenchmen in the fashion so demonstrated by Chingachgook, allowing the band to follow; or the whole band can travel along a high ledge, rimming the forest, and enter the fort from the opposing side. Heyward agrees to the latter, and Hawkeye says this course is probably more prudent, although the former would be more "manful."

One gets the sense that, although Hawkeye is more than willing to use his cunning to combat Magua and carry Heyward and the band to safety, he relishes a good fight, and feels that, in this case, he is giving up one in order to preserve the band's safety.

The group moves up the incline, out of the forest valleys, and onto a narrow path on the edge of a ridge, on which they rise for nearly a thousand feet. At this point, Hawkeye points out that the southern shore of Lake George is visible, and that the group will need to abandon its horses here, since they will not fit on the path ahead. The band moves on to a clearing, from which they see Fort William Henry, spread below, and a large group of thousands of French soldiers, who are midway through a siege of that fort, under Montcalm's command. Hawkeye remarks that the French will continue their shelling of the fort, which is so far holding out under the French attack, until the fog that is rolling in covers the southern end of the lake, and makes the shelling impossible.

The first interaction with Fort William Henry, and the first sustained description of an English and a French military installation. The Seven Years' War was an all-encompassing conflict, and Fenimore Cooper's idea, as in much historical fiction, is to show only one part of that broader conflict, "from the inside," as it is lived by the characters involved. Thus, we do not see the beginning or the end of the war, but rather experience only several key moments in it, including the Huron massacre of whites following the fall of Fort William Henry.

Heyward asks Hawkeye the most prudent course to gain admission to the fort, through enemy lines. Heyward wonders if the group shouldn't surrender to Montcalm himself and gain entry to the fort on account of the band containing two of Munro's daughters—a kind of "gentleman's agreement" between commanders. But Hawkeye replies that the band would never make the French lines, as Mingos are waiting in the forest between the French and English encampments, looking for straggling Englishmen. Hawkeye instead suggests a sneaking route to the fort, and Cora agrees, saying, courageously, that she will follow Hawkeye wherever he leads them.

Heyward assumes, perhaps wrongly, that the French will honor an agreement between European parties not to harm women and children, who are classified as "non-combatants." These rules of warfare derive, in part, from gentlemanly codes of conduct taken from European dueling and other competitions. But, in this war, as Hawkeye points out, the French have also their native allies, who are far less willing to respect these "gentlemanly" regulations, as they are not part of native custom.

The band travels down through the fog into the valley separating the English from the French lines, but avoiding the spots where Hawkeye believes Mingos might be camped. The band is nearly hit by a French cannonball, and in the fog, French soldiers hear the band but cannot locate them. The band momentarily becomes lost, traveling backward for a time, before seeing a flash from a canon they realize originates in the fort—the band rights itself and comes upon the walls of the fort, where Alice and Cora call out, saying that they are Munro's daughters and in need of protection. Munro, at the walls, hears his daughters' cries, and orders his soldiers to stop firing—the band is admitted into the walls of the fort, narrowly missing more French fire, and Munro rejoices at finally being reunited with his family.

Although Munro plays a relatively small part in the action of the novel, it is his love for his daughters that, in a sense, motivates all that underlies the novel's action. Alice and Cora are greatly beloved by their father, meaning that their safe return to Fort William Henry is of paramount importance. Heyward is entrusted with this task, and eventually Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook help greatly in it; thus Munro is indebted to all these men for the preservation of his daughters' lives—for as long as possible.

CHAPTER 15

The siege continues for four more days, as the two sides fire their artillery back and forth. Heyward, on a post near the edge of the fort, looks out on the morning of the fifth day, seeing the French taking a respite from their firing, as the British do the same. He is soon joined on the ramparts by Cora and Alice, and the two mock him, gently, for spending too much time fighting the war, and not enough time socializing with them within the fort.

Cora and Alice, though part of the siege, do not fight as soldiers do, although they help their father and tend to the other business of the place, which itself is as a small city tucked away at the south end of Lake George. But Cora and Alice also reserve a certain amount of goodwill for jesting with Heyward, whom they consider to be noble if a little formal at times.

Alice and Cora then thank Heyward, in seriousness, for his efforts in saving them thus far, and Cora goes on to say that she worries about her father Munro's health and reputation should he French defeat the English in the siege and take over Fort William Henry. The group wonders if Webb will send reinforcements to Fort William Henry from Fort Edward, although it appears less and less likely with each passing day. Heyward thanks Alice and Cora for their visit, but says he must meet with Munro to decide on strategy for the remainder of the siege.

In this section of the novel, the moment of greatest dramatic tension arrives when Webb reports he will not be sending reinforcements to help the inhabitants of Fort William Henry. It is at this point that Munro is "abandoned" by his own army, and this forces the handing-over of the fort to Montcalm, the massacre, and Magua's final capture of Alice and Cora.

Munro meets with Heyward, telling him that Hawkeye has passed through enemy lines and been released by Montcalm back into the English fort, with news from Webb that, in fact, no reinforcements will be sent to Fort William Henry. Munro states that the fort has very few options, and that Montcalm has requested that Munro speak with him outside the fort, in the French camp. Munro asks Heyward whether Heyward would mind meeting with Montcalm first, and Heyward replies that it would be his honor. Heyward passes out of the fort, under a sign of temporary truce, and meets with Montcalm, surrounded by French soldiers, in the nearby French line—he is greeted courteously by Montcalm, who prides himself on his "noble" carriage in battle.

Another instance of "nobility" in one's dealings with the enemy. The alliances of the French and Indian War were interesting ones, since, on the one hand, both the English and French had native allies, but on the other, the French and English considers themselves to be more similar, through a shared European culture, than they were to the natives with whom they were ostensibly friends. This confusion of alliance and "affinity," or cultural heritage, will cut through the conflicts throughout the novel.

Montcalm welcomes Heyward, and Heyward rapidly realizes that Montcalm expects Heyward, as Munro's emissary, to sue for peace and give up the fort to the French. But Heyward, too proud to do this, and also not having Munro's approval to surrender, hears Montcalm's subtle bragging about the strength of his own forces, and the inferiority of the English ones, and then, politely, requests leave to carry Montcalm's message back to the English lines. Heyward realizes that the only way the English will be able to negotiate with Montcalm is if they surrender, completely, to his forces. Otherwise, they will have to continue to fight and see if they can improve the terms of the peace.

Montcalm, for his part, is somewhat offended that Munro himself did not come to ask for a stop in the siege. Montcalm, though a "gentleman" in Fenimore Cooper's description, is all-too-willing to sacrifice his gentlemanly rules of conduct when that suits him. For example, both Hawkeye and the narrator critique Montcalm for failing to do enough to stop the native massacre of non-combatants following the handover of Fort William Henry.

CHAPTER 16

Heyward returns from Montcalm's camp, and finds Munro seated with his two daughters within Fort William Henry. Munro and his daughters have been speaking happily to one another, and though Heyward is loath to interrupt this scene of "domestic bliss," he nevertheless does so, in order to bring news of the meeting with Montcalm. Munro sends his daughters away, and, alone with Heyward, asks him, first, whether Heyward has any "designs" on his daughters. Munro makes sure Heyward knows that he (Munro) is receptive to those designs. Heyward, surprised that Munro wants to talk about marrying off his daughters before hearing of the battle-plans, goes on to say that he wishes to propose to Alice.

Here, Fenimore Cooper shows that ideas of marriage and society are never far from members of the English nobility, even during times of total crisis. Munro is so concerned for the safety of his daughters because he is concerned, in part, about the survival of his family, into which he hopes Heyward will marry one day. Heyward is a gentleman himself and a soldier, and because he is already Munro's friend, Munro would be happy to welcome him into the clan.

Munro is surprised; he had assumed that Heyward wished to marry Cora. Munro says he will have a much harder time parting with his daughter Alice, and asks Heyward to sit, so he (Munro) can tell Heyward the story of his two daughters. Munro, as a young man in Scotland, was to marry a woman named Alice Graham, but Graham's father did not approve. Thus Munro went to the West Indies as a soldier, where he ended up marrying another woman, distantly descended from one of the African peoples brought to the West Indies as slaves to wealthy Britons. Cora, the daughter of this, Munro's first marriage, therefore carries "in her blood," according to Munro, the "passionate" nature of those West Indian groups.

An intriguing backstory, if only for its social and political implications. The idea that Cora could not be brave "on her own," but instead would need to have this bravery attributed to a "foreignness" of character, is somewhat in line with the racial politics of the novel—although Fenimore Cooper himself was rather liberal, for his time, in his esteem for the culture and practices of non-white inhabitants of the Americas. Nevertheless, it is perhaps disappointing to a modern reader to have Cora's individuality reduced to a kind of sum total of her ethnic backgrounds.

Munro's first wife, however, then died in the West Indies, and he and Cora moved back to Scotland, where Munro found that Alice Graham had waited for him for twenty years—Munro then married Graham, and had another child, Alice. Thus Cora and Alice are half-sisters, and the differences in their temperaments and hair colors are explained by their different mothers. Munro intimates that he has a particular relationship to Alice because she is the only daughter of his beloved Alice Graham, whose patience Munro has come to idealize over the ensuing years (Alice Graham also passed away, when Alice the daughter was young).

Alice, too, has her timidity and shyness traced to her having a timid, devoted woman for her mother. What is less clear is why Munro, having announced just this biographical data, would then have trouble with Heyward marrying Alice. Perhaps Munro is simply protective of Alice, considering her to be more "naturally" his heir; perhaps Munro simply believes that Heyward and Cora, in their respective bravery, would make a better match

Suddenly, however, Munro snaps out of his sadness and asks, in an officious voice, if Heyward has news from Montcalm's camp—Heyward understands this to mean that Munro wishes to suspend, for a time, talk of these personal matters. Heyward relates his conversation with Montcalm to Munro, and Munro realizes that Montcalm was offended Munro himself did not come to have the "parley"; thus Munro resolves to meet with Montcalm in person, outside the camp. He and Heyward walk out, under British guard, from the fort and approach Montcalm.

In keeping with the overlap of military and personal matters, Munro turns quickly to the battle at hand, and announces that he will have a talk with Montcalm himself. Munro seems to expect that Montcalm will have a different story to tell him than he told Heyward, perhaps because Heyward was a subordinate, and this offended Montcalm's vanity.

Montcalm speaks with Munro, again saying that the British have been overwhelmed by French forces. Munro, indignant, replies that Webb will be sending reinforcements from Fort Edward, but Montcalm, now quite proud, shows Heyward and Munro a letter, intercepted from the British and signed by Webb, stating that Webb considers Fort William Henry to be lost, and that, therefore, Webb will send no reinforcements. Munro is crushed by this news, and he realizes that he will have to abandon the fort to the French. He leaves Montcalm, dejected, and allows Heyward to arrange the truce with Montcalm; Montcalm promises that the British and their dependents in the fort will be allowed safe and orderly passage through enemy lines to their own (British) territory, after the hand-over of the fort is accomplished.

A sobering moment for Munro and for the fort. Webb, who is never actively described in the novel, becomes famous in the book not for his treachery but for his lack of sympathy, for his fellow Englishmen. Webb perhaps believes that Montcalm is incapable of the kind of failure of oversight that will allow the impending massacre outside the fort, at the hands of the Hurons; perhaps Webb is simply too concerned with other aspects of the war to care very much about Heyward and his band. But, in any case, this decision is a momentous one for the course of the narrative.

CHAPTER 17

The chapter begins with Montcalm walking through the woods between the French encampment and Fort William Henry. Montcalm, in the stillness of the early morning, is taking in the fact that he and the French have finally subdued the English and overpowered their fort. On his walk, Montcalm encounters Magua, who has also walked in the night from his own encampment—that of the Hurons—toward the English fort.

One might have wondered in the preceding chapters why Magua did not make an attempt on the lives of the members of the band through stealth. Here, in this chapter, he tries just that, but is stopped, coincidentally, by Montcalm, who happens to be out walking, surveying the fort he is soon to control.

Magua pulls out his rifle and takes aim at a form he sees on the ramparts of the British fort—a tall frame, which the narrator does not describe, but which Magua assumes to be that of Hawkeye. But just as Magua is about to fire his rifle, Montcalm stops him, saying that there is now a truce between the English and the French, and that, therefore, the Hurons also have a truce with the English. But Magua states that, if an Englishman is an enemy of Magua's beforehand, he does not cease to be his enemy now. Montcalm asks Magua to walk back to his Huron encampment, and Magua does, but Montcalm is not sure whether the Hurons accept the truce brokered between the English and French.

Here is evidence that Montcalm himself understands, or appears to understand, that Magua will not respect a truce. Yet the narrator judges Montcalm harshly for his unwillingness to recognize that the Hurons will act to gain their own revenge, even after the treaty between the French and English is signed. Perhaps Montcalm believes he is not responsible for the behavior of his allies, or perhaps he simply does not want to know what kind of retribution Magua is planning.

Montcalm returns to the French lines, and the narrator shifts the scene to inside Fort William Henry, where Heyward meets with Cora and Alice, telling them they must prepare for their own "safe conveyance" from the fort, along with the other English soldiers and their families. Heyward sees David, singing psalms to himself as comfort in this frightening time, and Heyward asks David to marshal his courage and guard Alice and Cora as they walk out of the fort with the other English families. David promises Heyward he will do this, and Heyward continues making preparations among the soldiers for the retreat.

David, at this point in the novel, has seen a great deal of bloodshed, and he will see a great deal more. But it is already apparent that he is becoming more sure of his abilities, and of his "non-combatant" status, allowing him to move freely into and out of enemy lines, and to help the band in ways that are not directly military. Hawkeye and Heyward are beginning to recognize David's bravery in this unconventional role.

Alice, Cora, and David, along with other English families, begin walking out of the fort, and observe the French armies, arranged in orderly fashion outside and allowing the English a peaceful departure. As the English are walking out, however, the Hurons emerge from the woods; one Huron soldier grabs the shawl and then the infant child from a mother, and when the mother protests, begging for the child to be returned, the Hurons "dashes the child's brain out" on a rock, then kills the mother with a tomahawk to the brain.

A terrifying scene, and one of the most vividly rendered in the novel. Fenimore Cooper wishes to make clear, here, that the Hurons are motivated by a kind of revenge that is antithetical to European mores, and to those of the Delawares as well—Uncas and Chingachgook consider the behavior of the Hurons in this instance to be reprehensible.

At this, the Huron war cry is raised—directed by Magua, who has also emerged from the woods—and Hurons begin massacring the English families as they retreat outside the fort. Soldiers from both the English and French armies attempt to intercede and protect the families, but the Hurons manage to kill a great many unarmed men, women, and children. David, the singer, finds Alice and Cora, who have abandoned all hope and are calling, in vain, for their father. David stands next to them and begins singing hymns, loudly, causing the natives to become confused by his song, and, surprisingly, protecting Alice and Cora from harm.

Once again, Alice and Cora seek to be rescued, only in this case, the field is so enshrouded in gunsmoke, fog, and terror, it is difficult to make out where Alice and Cora might be. Once again the women are portrayed as passive beings requiring a strong man to save them from the violence of another man.

But Magua hears David's hymns, too, and comes running over to Alice and Cora. Magua repeats his demand that Cora become his wife, and come live with him; when Cora again says no, Magua picks up Alice, who has fainted in the heat of battle, and begins running with her back to the Huron camp. Cora, wanting only to protect her sister, runs after Alice and Magua, and David, remembering his promise to Heyward, also follows. Deep in the woods, Magua places the still-unconscious Alice on the back of a horse (the same horses abandoned by the band earlier, before their arrival at the fort); Cora willingly gets on the horse with Magua and Alice, to protect her sister, and David gets on another horse, following behind.

Although it perhaps seems implausible that, amid all the din of warfare, Magua would again ask Cora for her hand in marriage, what Fenimore Cooper appears to make clear in this scene is that Magua is not asking at all, and that Cora has no choice but to follow Magua or be killed. Cora continues resisting Magua, saying that he will have to injure her or kill her, since she will never willingly capitulate to his offer of marriage.

Magua leads his horse back up to the top of the mountain, south of Lake George, from which the band, under Hawkeye's leadership, had previously observed Fort William Henry. Magua instead shows Alice (who has now woken up), Cora, and David the terrible destruction wrought by the Hurons on the innocent English, below. Cora and Alice are devastated when they realize the extent of the destruction the Hurons have caused in the massacre.

The aftermath of the massacre is a horrific sight. Fenimore Cooper wishes to render this as vividly as possible without lingering on scenes of gore and bloodshed, especially since this adventure novel was intended for, and indeed was read by, a wide audience from many different age groups.

CHAPTER 18

The morning after, Munro, Heyward, Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook walk out on the field where the massacre has taken place. The Hurons have fled, triumphantly, to the woods, and the French have retreated back to their own camp. The five men look for signs of Cora and Alice, and behold the devastation before them. Hawkeye claims he has never seen such bloodshed of innocents, and vows to take revenge on the French and Hurons. Uncas, walking among the dead bodies, finds a bit of Cora's shawl, and announces that, since there is no blood on it, it must point to her escape into the woods. Munro cries out to Uncas, begging the young Mohican to find his two young girls, and Uncas vows that he will.

Now the die has been cast, and the novel's action speeds toward its resolution. Magua's latest kidnapping of Cora and Alice will set in motion a series of interactions with the Huron and Delaware villages approximately forty miles away, north of Lake George—and Heyward, Hawkeye, and the Mohicans will do all that they can to rescue both young women and return them to Munro. The colonel, for his part, will do little from now on, other than await his daughters' return—the massacre outside the fort has devastated him.

Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye also find signs of David's and Magua's footprints and clothing near Cora's torn shawl, causing them to conclude that Magua has taken Cora with him, and that David has followed along. Neither the Mohicans nor Hawkeye, however, can find any evidence of Alice's footprint or clothing, causing Heyward to worry aloud about what has become of her.

Alice, of course, leaves no footprint because she has been hoisted immediately onto horseback..

But Hawkeye says that Alice is perhaps in the company of Cora, Magua, and David, and Hawkeye and the Mohicans vow to search through the wilderness for them. Although Munro and Heyward wish to begin the search that day, Hawkeye believes it is important to rest for an evening and develop a plan, and Heyward accedes to Hawkeye's wisdom. The group heads back to the ruined, abandoned fort to prepare and sleep.

Once again, Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook believe it is more useful to spend the night formulating a plan than it is to rush into the wilderness without one. The time they lose hunting Magua will be time they gain, owing to greater efficiency once they do decide on a course of action.

CHAPTER 19

Chingachgook and Uncas eat around a campfire within the ruined fort, and Munro retires to his quarters to spend the night alone, and to worry about the fate of his daughters. Heyward and Hawkeye mount the fort's rampart to look over the plains again, where the massacre was conducted. Heyward believes he hears a rustling outside the fort, and asks Hawkeye whether it is wolves or natives poised for another attack. Hawkeye decides to call over Uncas, who has a very powerful sense of hearing, to determine who is stalking around the fort.

Uncas, at this point in the novel, takes on more of a leadership role among the band. Uncas knows the customs of the Delawares and of the Hurons; he is greatly skilled, as evidenced here, in using trail markers, scents, and sounds to stalk his enemy; and his courage in battle is unyielding. Both Chingachgook and Hawkeye are notably proud of the warrior Uncas has become.

Uncas lies close to the ground and, as Heyward watches with Hawkeye, proceeds to sense that a native is in fact walking nearby, perhaps hoping to pick off any remaining Englishmen he sees by the light of Chingachgook's campfire. Suddenly, a shot rings out in the fort, and Chingachgook is nearly hit; Uncas goes off into the night, and returns quickly with the scalp of an Oneida, a native typically allied with the Mohicans against the Mingos.

Very little is known about the Oneida in the novel, other than the fact that they are normally Delaware allies. The confusion, here, points to a series of difficulties in pinning down exactly which native groups are allied at any particular time. Colonial warfare and other shifting alliances make tracking enemy and friendly native especially difficult in wartime.

When Heyward expresses confusion as to why an Oneida would attack a Mohican, Hawkeye answers that, perhaps, the Oneida believed that the French had taken over the fort, and was looking for revenge. Hawkeye says it is also possible that, since native alliances can be quickly broken and can become overlapping between the French and the English, this particular native in fact desired to kill Englishmen, as repayment for some unknown and previous violence done against his people.

One of the primary modes of native justice is retribution, or the idea that, if one commits a crime, one then has this crime acted upon him (or her). This norm of justice, often called "an eye for an eye," will be demonstrated later on, when a Huron warrior's cowardice in battle causes him to be killed by his own people, in his own village.

Heyward withdraws a few paces and watches as Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye dine around their fire and converse in the Delaware language (also the language of the Mohicans). Although Heyward cannot determine what they are talking about, he assumes it is a discussion on why the Oneida attacked the fort, and on the means by which the band can find Alice and Cora and defeat Magua. Heyward is entranced by the music of the Delaware language and by the civility with which the Mohicans and Hawkeye speak to one another. When Chingachgook announces that it is time for them all to sleep, the natives and Hawkeye do so around the fire, and Heyward decides he will also turn in for the night to prepare for the next day's journey.

Just as Heyward took in the beautiful surroundings of the upstate New York woods earlier in the novel, here he pauses to marvel for a moment at the native culture and civilization on display before him. Heyward, like Hawkeye, seems to recognize the rich tapestry of life, family, and community that exists in Native American societies. But Heyward, unlike Hawkeye, is less inclined to believe that native societies will survive the continued onslaught of the French and the English in their colonial wars.

CHAPTER 20

The next morning, Hawkeye wakes up Munro and Heyward, and the five of them move, on rocks and twigs (so as not to leave tracks in the mud), toward the river lying near Fort William Henry. There, Hawkeye has the five men of the band slide into a Mohican canoe, which Uncas and Chingachgook then paddle up the river and into the "open" waters of Lake George. Hawkeye believes that this "watery trail" will be much harder to follow, if the Hurons are tracking the band.

Another instance of travel-by-water, although in this case the band paddles on the open waters of Lake George, where they cannot be shielded by the high river banks apparent in the forests through which they have recently travelled. The strength of Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook is particularly remarkable, since the three have slept very little and fought a great deal in recent days.

Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye begin paddling the canoe, with Heyward and Munro sitting towards its rear. As the band gets out farther into the center of Lake George, a group of Hurons appear, in several canoes, and begin firing on the band. Uncas and Chingachgook dodge the enemies' bullets, and Hawkeye attempts to draw his rifle on the group, but Uncas and Chingachgook paddle so quickly, and with such "dexterity," that the band's canoe is soon out of reach of the Hurons' guns. Although Hawkeye wants to wait for the Hurons to approach again, so he can attempt to kill one or two, Munro begs that the band keep going, in search of Alice and Cora. Hawkeye grudgingly agrees to do so.

Hawkeye, here, shows that although he is keenly interested in protecting Cora and Alice from Magua, he is also concerned with killing as many Hurons as possible. Hawkeye, like Uncas and Chingachgook, believes that the Mingos are the mortal enemies of the Delaware, and he therefore hates to waste any opportunity he has to kill several, to lessen their numbers, to weaken their village. But Heyward reminds Hawkeye that his primary duty, in this case, is to Alice and Cora.

Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook take up paddling again, and continue for hours until they reach an alcove, where they beach the canoe and walk for a time in the woods. Hawkeye, desiring to create a diversion for the Hurons following him, then has the band walk back in their own footprints toward the alcove where the canoe is hidden—they continue paddling up along the shore of the lake, and get out at a different location, preparing once again to search for Magua, Cora, and Alice in the woods, and hoping any following Hurons will be tricked by their earlier, apparent journey into the wilderness, some miles to the south.

Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook, though not as manipulative as Magua, are no less skillful in using the shadows and hiding-places of the woods to their advantage. Here, they hope to hide all trace of their northward travel, and so they stow their canoe and make it seem as though their up-lake journey, toward the Huron village, did not happen at all. They will not return to this spot, or to this canoe, for the remainder of the novel.

CHAPTER 21

The band soon begins a long walk between Lake Champlain and the "head waters of the Hudson," a distance rarely traversed by white settlers—English or French—and not very well known even by natives. Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye hunt for traces of Magua and the two young women, but finding very little, they begin to despair that perhaps Magua has left no trail at all, or that they will never be able to find Munro's daughters. Soon, however, Uncas finds a small print he believes to belong to Cora, and Hawkeye and Chingachgook celebrate Uncas's perceptiveness, which Hawkeye believes is a "credit to his people."

Even in a region known for its forbidding terrain, the sub-region between Lake Champlain and the Hudson is an especially unexplored country. Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook feel they are capable of traversing this region, but it is remarkable that Cora and Alice, along with Magua and followed by David, were able to walk through this land for nearly forty miles without significant rest of sustenance. Fenimore Cooper and the narrator seem equally impressed by Cora's and Alice's perseverance.

As they continue on this almost imperceptible trail, which begins to show signs of the horses Magua is using, Uncas stops by a creek and finds the faintest imprint of a moccasin, about the size of David's feet—Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye conclude that David has been forced into native shoes and has been made to walk, and that Magua and the two young women are following in his tracks, so as not to leave a trail of their own. At this point, the band, still continuing on this faint trail, has been walking in the woods for nearly forty miles.

Another instance of Magua's cunning. Here, he makes it seem that Alice and Cora are not each walking together; Magua knows that Uncas's skill in tracking animals and human prints is so well-developed, he would be able to spot even the smallest trace of Cora or Alice's footprint, or a hoof-print of a horse they happened to be riding.

Suddenly, Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye realize that David, perhaps, became tired in his walking—Magua's and the two young women's footprint are now visible, too, and it appears that Magua's group has made no further effort to "conceal their trail," meaning that Hawkeye and the rescue band can follow the remainder of their path through the woods with relative ease. At last, they come upon a clearing of low earthen mounds, the likes of which Heyward has never seen. Hawkeye dispatches Uncas and Chingachgook into the surrounding wilderness to seek out Magua or other Hurons, in case they might be planning another attack. Heyward stands stock-still, staring at the earthen mounds, and notices animals among them and a man he doesn't recognize, who is standing nearby.

David, throughout the novel, seems always to turn up when characters least expect him. Here, he has found himself among a community of beavers, whom he is (comically) attempting to convert to Christianity, through the power of his hymns. Hawkeye recognizes him immediately, and Heyward, always more cautious, takes a few moments to understand that it is their old friend standing among these wild animals. Interestingly, Magua will later spend a small amount of time communicating with this same group of beavers.

Hawkeye begins to laugh and approach this man, and though Heyward is confused as to why Hawkeye is not afraid of him, soon Heyward realizes that the strange man is David, that the four-legged beings are beavers by a small lake, and that their earthen "houses" are the dens beavers build by bodies of water. Heyward begins to laugh as well, and Hawkeye greets David heartily, preparing to learn news of what has become of the rest of Magua's group.

The beavers' dams are apparently somewhat similar to the Huron settlements; the Hurons themselves consider that their mythical-animal ancestor is, of all animals, the beaver, thus perhaps explaining the connection between the appearance of the two communities.

CHAPTER 22

Hawkeye, Uncas, Chingachgook, Munro, and Heyward begin speaking to David. David says that Alice and Cora are all right, physically, though they are exhausted by their journey through the forest. David also announces that Cora has been placed in captivity with a neighboring tribe—following a Mingo custom in which prisoners are separated—and Alice has been spirited off among "the women of the Hurons," who are encamped beyond a nearby hill.

This Mingo custom—the separation of prisoners—is never explained in its entirety. It seems most likely that Magua is attempting to use his prisoner distribution to draw the Huron and the Delaware communities closer together—after all, he is concerned that each community believes he has double-crossed it.

Heyward asks David how they came to travel over land to their current location, and David briefly tells of their journey, and the fact that, although Magua kept them as hostages, he did not harm them. He instead made them walk long distances and announced that the sisters would be split up when the group reached David's current location, near the beaver dam. Hawkeye announces a plan to fetch the two women: that Hawkeye and Uncas will go in to the neighboring tribe, who are believed to be related to Delawares and, strangely, allied with the Mingos; and Heyward and David will go off over the hill in search of Alice, among the Hurons.

It is apparently another Mingo custom that prisoners are not tortured or harmed once it has been decided that they are, in fact, prisoners. This code of ethics, however, does appear to have other components: for example, Magua appeared more than ready to kill Alice, Cora, Heyward, and David in the forest clearing toward the beginning of the novel. But now Magua realizes that these prisoners are far more valuable to him alive than dead.

Uncas dresses Heyward in the costume of a "fool," a wandering songster in the French-speaking regions near Ticonderoga; Heyward and David travel together through the woods, and encounter a clearing in which 50 or 60 wooden huts are situated. There, David tells Heyward that he (David) has tried, for the past three days of his captivity, to teach the native children to sing psalms—for David has been permitted to pass through the Huron village, as he is not considered a warrior—but the natives will not learn the songs, and instead prefer their native "hymns." Heyward, finding David to be naïve and loveable in his insistence on Christian song, enters the village with David by his side, wondering if the two of them will be able to whisk Alice away.

David is an intriguing foil to Hawkeye. Although David is very much a "man with a cross," a practitioner of the Christian faith whose religion informs all aspects of his life, he is also a man who moves between white and native society. The difference, of course, is founded in each man's attitude toward violence. Hawkeye, on the one hand, is always ready for an attack; David, on the other, does as much as he can to avoid violence, and indeed barely even knows how to discharge a weapon.

CHAPTER 23

Heyward and David walk into the center of the village, and the children give long shouts, alerting warriors standing in a lodge nearby to the two white men's presence. David and Heyward walk up to the warriors and into their lodge. Heyward speaks first, in French, and asks if anyone there also speaks the language of "The Grand Monarque," or French king, to whom the Hurons, nominally, are allied. One warrior speaks French back to Heyward, and Heyward says that he is a healer, come to this Huron village, dressed in native garb, to see if anyone might want his services. Heyward also compliments the Hurons for their recent "victory" against the English in the massacre at Fort William Henry.

Heyward's disguise, although it does not seem so convincing to the reader, is apparently good enough to trick the Hurons into believing that he does, in fact, have the powers of a medical practitioner. In native societies like that of the Hurons, it seems that medicine men were part medical doctors, part spiritual healers, and Heyward does a fine job of imitating the particular, preacher-like rhetoric of someone in this field. Here, again, Heyward's command of the French language becomes quite useful.

Heyward walks outside with the other warriors in the main lodge when he hears a large party of Huron men returning to the village. They are bringing with him two captives, one Delaware, one Huron, both of whom appear to have been caught out in the woods. Heyward watches from the edge of a large ring of people—the men, women, and children of the Huron village—as the captured Delaware, who Heyward realizes is Uncas, dodges a line of attacking Hurons and manages to escape the ceremonial "ring." Heyward, confused by the nature of the ritual, eventually understands that Uncas has, according to this test of evasive skill, earned his right to survival—a right afforded to prisoners who manage to evade capture during this "ordeal of the ring."

A very interesting point in the novel, one that, like some other native rituals, is not fully explained by Fenimore Cooper, but is rather allowed to develop organically, throughout the course of the narrative, and is then somewhat clarified later on. This method of narration, in which explication is sometimes left to the reader, occasionally makes moments in the text difficult to follow, but it also causes the narrator to recede into the background of the novel, and convinces the reader that she or he is, in fact, experiencing these events as they happen.

Heyward also realizes that the other Huron brought with Uncas, who does not manage to escape the "ordeal of the ring," is being "tried" according to Huron custom for his cowardice in battle. A young, powerfully-built woman of the tribe, and the tribes eldest male chieftain, both examine this young Huron, named "Reed-that-bends," and after pronouncing a sentence of cowardice, the chief slowly, ceremonially stabs the young Huron in the heart with a knife, killing him. Heyward notices with revulsion that, as he is being killed, the young Huron appears to smile, happy, finally, at least to die with honor, despite having his lack of courage announced to the whole tribe. After the ritual slaying, the fires of the ordeal-ring are put out, and the mass of Hurons begins walking back to their huts.

A shocking moment of violence. Here, the violence is perhaps even more foregrounded than it was during the "massacre" sequence, outside Fort William Henry. In that latter scene, the violence was in some sense explained, rather than described vividly. Here, the violence, directed at one man, assumes the foreground of the narrative, and the narrator himself (or herself) seems shocked even in the re-telling of these events. Hewyard, too, wonders whether this form of violence might be directed toward him, if he is found out.

CHAPTER 24

Heyward manages to speak quickly with Uncas in the confusion following the execution of the young Huron—Uncas tells Heyward to continue in his disguise as a fool and medicine man, and reminds Heyward that Hawkeye and Chingachgook remain in the surrounding woods as protection, in case Heyward should need it. Heyward walks back into the lodge where the warriors, with whom he had been speaking previously, are reassembled. One warrior there asks Heyward if he can help to rid someone in his family of an evil spirit. Heyward, as "medicine man," pretends that he can, hoping to be able to go from hut to hut in search of Alice.

This is, in some sense, a stock predicament experienced by characters when in disguise—that character is then tasked, by another character, with a job typically reserved for an actual doctor, or lawyer, or ship's captain, rather than an imaginary one. Thus, in this novel, Heyward the "medicine man" must treat the very real medical ailment afflicting a suffering woman in the village. Although Heyward sympathizes with the woman's plight, he is, of course, unable to offer her any substantive cure.

Before Heyward can depart, Magua enters the lodge, having been away conveying Cora to the other, related tribe nearby. The other warriors fall silent when Magua asks for "Reed-that-bends," wondering where he is. After a span of several anxious minutes, in which Heyward and Uncas stand (unrecognized by Magua) in the shadows of the lodge, an older man, who is revealed to be "Reed-that-bends"'s father, states publically that he is ashamed of his son's cowardice, and that he believes his son's execution was justified. The old man, who has done his best to hide his tears in uttering this public declamation against his son, leaves the lodge, and the warriors then turn their attentions to Magua.

A harrowing scene. Here, the father must announce that his son is better off dead—indeed, that he has no son at all. Fenimore Cooper does a subtle job of rendering the father's grief, mixed with his acknowledgment that the social customs of the Huron village must take precedence over his own suffering and anguish. In general, Fenimore Cooper reserves a special honor for the stoic, impassive, courageous nature he observes in many native tribes, and this is a prime example.

After the old man leaves, Magua turns and recognizes Uncas in the lodge—although he does not recognize Heyward, whose medicine-man clothes are a convincing disguise. Magua immediately demands that the captured Uncas must be killed the next morning, and Magua goes on to relate to the other warriors the events of the novel preceding the massacre at Fort William Henry, including Uncas's rescue of the two sisters, with the help of Chingachgook and Hawkeye. When another warrior, seething with anger at the Hurons Uncas has killed, tries to throw a tomahawk at Uncas in the lodge, however, Magua intervenes, saying that Uncas will have to suffer through the night, and will be executed in the morning, according to Huron custom.

Again following the custom that major decisions are put off until the next morning, so that the tribe and its elders can have time to think over their options. In this instance, Uncas's execution, which could have happen in the "trial by ordeal" ring that caused the death of "Reed-that-bends," has instead been put off by a single day. Despite all this, Magua seems delighted and very much ready to execute Uncas as soon as he is permitted to do so.

Heyward is then led through the village, across the path of a domesticated bear, into a small cavern into which the Hurons place their sick—whom they consider to be infested with strange spirits. There, Heyward discovers that David visits these caverns in order to sing to the "spiritually sick". The Hurons believe that David is either insane or another form of shaman, or healer, and they therefore allow him safe passage throughout the Huron village. Heyward, seeing the ill woman whom he is to try to heal, begins preparing his "chant," as the Huron warrior looks on. The domesticated bear has also followed them into the cave, and sits nearby as Heyward begins his charms.

Just as David was speaking with the beavers earlier in the novel, and Magua will do so later on, here, in this section, characters believe that they are interacting either with a real bear, or with a medicine man using the bear costume as part of his spiritual healing. Of course, neither is true in this case; it is merely Hawkeye, taking advantage of his knowledge of tribal tradition in order to sneak into the Huron village and find Alice and Heyward.

CHAPTER 25

Soon, however, the warrior states that Heyward must be alone to work his magic, and so leaves Heyward with the bear and the ill young woman in the cavern—David, too, walks back to the village, stating that Heyward must be left to do his work. Suddenly, however, the bear takes off its own head, and Heyward realizes that the bear is really Hawkeye in an incredibly convincing disguise—Hawkeye has managed to steal the bear costume from a previous wearer, a conjuror in the Huron village (the costume is used for religion rites), and has accompanied Heyward to the place of his incantations, hoping to speak with him about Uncas's rescue. It appears that only Heyward believed the bear to be real at all, and not a man in disguise, although only Heyward knows that Hawkeye, and not a Huron, is now wearing the costume.

Heyward has never before seen the kinds of Huron rituals that require the bear suit, and Hawkeye's "performance" of the bear must be convincing enough to cause Heyward to believe, for a moment, that the bear suit is, in fact, a bear. Although the beaver appears to be the totem animal of the Huron village, the bear is the symbol most associated with its warriors, in the same way that the tortoise is the symbol most associated with the warriors of the Delaware tribe. Uncas will show the Delaware chiefs that he has a blue tortoise tattooed on his chest, as a symbol of his Delaware heritage, later in the narrative.

Hawkeye then asks if Heyward has managed to find any trace of Alice, and Heyward says that he has not. Hawkeye thinks that Alice might be hidden in another partition of the cabin in which the ill woman is lying (still sick), and Hawkeye, back in his bear costume, climbs up and over to another cell of the cavern, finding Alice hidden inside. Heyward climbs over the partition and embraces Alice, telling her that he loves her, that he soon wishes to reunite her with her father, and that her sister Cora is safely captive at the neighboring tribe.

Although Fenimore Cooper does not give Alice a great many lines in the novel, she nevertheless makes an interesting request to her intended: that Heyward not mention any more thoughts of marriage until Alice knows that her father and sister are safely reunited. Alice does not exhibit the same external strength as Cora during difficult situations, but she is nevertheless possessed of a quiet courage all her own.

Just as Heyward is telling Alice that he loves her and wishes to marry her, Magua enters the cave partition, and smiles: he now has *both* Alice and Heyward trapped. But before Magua can act to kill Heyward and Alice, Hawkeye enters the cave partition, having heard the commotion, and leaps onto Magua, pinning him and allowing Heyward to tie Magua up. Hawkeye then takes off his bear-head, revealing his true identity, and Magua announces that he will do all he can to kill Hawkeye, Heyward, and the rest of their band. But Hawkeye stops up Magua's mouth with a gag, while Heyward carries Alice, who has fainted, out of the cave. Hawkeye follows in his bear suit.

Hawkeye's interactions with Magua have become increasingly dramatic—as in Hawkeye's revelation, here, that he is not a Mingo shaman—and the scene thus described has a heavy dose of comedy. The novel has only a few sequences that interrupt the overwhelming mood of dramatic tension and battle, but these sequences—like the earlier scene of David among the beavers—show a different, more jovial side of characters like Heyward and Hawkeye.

The group runs into the father of the sick girl and other warriors as they seek to escape the village, but Heyward tricks them by saying that the woman flung over his shoulder is also sick, and needs a spirit cast out of her as well; the warrior, wondering what has happened to his own daughter, rushes back to the cavern, but Heyward warns him not to enter yet, for fear of the evil spirits still residing inside, by the sick woman. While the Hurons wait outside the caverns, Hawkeye and Heyward carry Alice into the woods, where Alice revives from her faint.

Heyward exhibits an increasingly strong ability to think on his feet, and to convince natives around him that he is not the English soldier he so patently seemed at the beginning of the novel. Heyward's friendship with Hawkeye and Uncas has perhaps enabled him to blend in more discreetly with the tribes of the upstate New York region.

After they walk farther into the woods, Hawkeye directs Alice and Heyward to the Delaware village nearby, where Cora is believed to be held. Hawkeye states that, as loyal as he is to the two sisters' cause, he is even more loyal to that of Uncas, whom he has lived with and fought with for many years, and whom he considers an adopted son (along with Chingachgook, the boy's actual father). Heyward recognizes Hawkeye's obligation to Uncas, and wishes Hawkeye the best of luck in his attempt to free the young Mohican from the Hurons. Hawkeye then goes back to the Huron village, and Alice and Heyward flee farther into the woods, toward the Delawares.

Hawkeye here makes an important declaration of his allegiances—one that the reader has suspected all along. Hawkeye is as close to Chingachgook as a brother can be, and Hawkeye has taught Uncas a great deal about life in the forest, just as Uncas has taught Hawkeye a great deal. Therefore, much as Hawkeye wishes to save the entire Munro clan in one day, he knows that, as a manner of personal and "native" honor, he must return to the village and do all he can to set Uncas free.

CHAPTER 26

Hawkeye walks back to the Huron village, and finds David in his own, small hut, which the Huron permit him to live in, separate from the rest of the villagers. Hawkeye, who is still dressed in his bear costume, addresses David, and asks if David can take Hawkeye to where Uncas is being held. David, is at first scared of the bear, but then recognizes Hawkeye and says that he will be able to set up a private meeting between Hawkeye and Uncas.

David, once again, proves immensely useful to the band, as they attempt here to save Uncas and continue their fight against Magua. David understands that his status as a non-combatant will allow him to spy on the Hurons—the kind of activity his religious studies probably forbade, but one that is a great help in the forest.

David walks with Hawkeye to the lodge of the chiefs in the village, and says that he, David, wishes to take this "conjuror" (Hawkeye) to Uncas, in order to humiliate Uncas for his capture—a form of shaming common in Huron and Delaware cultures. David tells the Huron warriors that they will not be able to come with them, as David does not want Uncas's "womanliness" to taint the Hurons. The Hurons grant Hawkeye and David access to Uncas.

David has become so adept in the ways of the natives, he understands that this shaming ritual, in which Uncas would be compared to a woman and a bad warrior, would be a very persuasive one for the Hurons. It is hard to imagine the pursuit of Magua being so successful without David's assistance.

Hawkeye enters Uncas's small prison-hut while David guards the entrance. Hawkeye dances for a moment in the bear costume, but Uncas, recognizing immediately that it is only a man in a bear suit, asks who has come for him. Hawkeye announces himself, and tells David, quickly, to help him untie the bands shackling Uncas to the prison-hut walls. Hawkeye tells Uncas that he can go ahead, leaving Hawkeye and David to escape the Huron village together, but Uncas says he will not abandon "his father's brother," and Hawkeye, cheered by this news, has Uncas put on the bear costume, and David put on Hawkeye's scout garments, since, as Hawkeye puts it, David will have need of Hawkeye's tools and weapons in the forest. Hawkeye then puts on David's clothes, and pretends to be the singer.

Just as Hawkeye went back into the Huron village to rescue Uncas, so now is Uncas unwilling to let Hawkeye fend for himself, in the escape from that same village. This scene tells the reader a great deal about native custom: in essence, the nature of honor in the native societies depicted in the novel is one of reciprocal help and mutual respect. Uncas and Hawkeye are willing to help one another, because each knows that the other would do the same. This allows Uncas, Hawkeye, and Chingachgook to fight armies of far greater size and strength—because they function so effectively as a fighting unit.

David stays behind in the Huron village, creating a diversion by yelling in Uncas's prison hut, to allow Hawkeye and Uncas to escape. Hawkeye, singing loudly and pretending to be David, walks with Uncas (still in the bear suit) to the edge of the village, and safely; David screams in the center of the village, drawing Huron warriors away from Hawkeye and Uncas; and the two proceed deeper into the forest, toward the Delaware village, with the idea that David will meet them there soon, after escaping his Huron captors—Hawkeye bets that the Hurons will not attack or imprison David because they believe him insane and a "non-compassor," or a non-combatant.

For much of the novel, David did not understand that his singing would be considered a distraction to those around him, especially to natives—David simply thought he was singing God's word, and doing God's work among the "heathens." But now, just as David understands that he can act as a spy and help the cause of the band, here he can use his music for the purposes of distraction, not for religious instruction.

CHAPTER 27

The Hurons rush to the prison-hut and discover David in Uncas's place; they raise a loud cry, but David begins singing his hymns loudly, and the Hurons are once again reminded that David is "insane," and they don't hurt him. The Huron warriors then gather near the caverns, where the sick native woman has been lying, attended to by the original Huron conjuror, from whom Hawkeye stole the bear costume. The native woman has now died from her sickness—which the Hurons still attribute to an evil spirit, perhaps brought into the village by Heyward and Uncas—and the conjuror begins telling of Hawkeye's trickery in helping to rescue Alice, when Magua emerges from the caverns, having broken his bonds, and seething with rage.

Magua's slippery ability to evade complete defeat is one of the novel's most obvious plot points. Because Magua is so adept at avoiding total defeat, the novel manages to maintain its structure of escape, rescue, and pursuit throughout changes of village and scenery..

The Hurons are shocked to find that Magua, so great a warrior, has been trapped and duped by Heyward, Uncas, and Hawkeye. Magua, enraged, screams that he will exact revenge, and wonders aloud how best to capture and kill the three men. But Magua quickly regains his composure, and to a group of assembled Huron warriors, women, and children, he makes a long argument flattering the Hurons, and stating that, because Cora is still being held by the Delawares, and because Magua wants Cora for his wife, the Hurons must proceed with caution, in order to find and capture the three men, and Alice, and in order not to startle the Delawares, who hold Cora.

Another speech of Magua's. Now, as the novel nears its close, Magua has become, among other things, a kind of politician and diplomat between the Huron and the Delaware villages. Here, Magua attempts to convince all the Hurons with whom he speaks that Uncas, Chingachgook, and Hawkeye are dangerous, and that the only method of combatting this danger is the waging of complete war against the band and their allies.

After this long speech, complete with exhortations to the gods and to the strength of his people, Magua convinces the Hurons to follow his plan. He passes the night in his hut, and in the morning, twenty warriors join him with rifles. The Huron warriors depart from the village, single-file. Passing the beaver mounds Magua, whose totem-animal is the beaver, begins speaking with the four-legged creatures, as part of a ritual for good luck in the ensuing hunt. After this "speech" with the beavers, is done, the Hurons move on, slowly, toward the Delaware village, and because they do not look back, they do not see that one of the beavers is actually Chingachgook in beaver-disguise—he has overheard the Hurons' plan.

A curious scene, one that is not really referred to throughout the remainder of the novel. Chingachgook, among his other abilities, is perhaps a master of disguise, not unlike Hawkeye, who has hid for a time in a bear suit. Chingachgook's mission, here, is presumably one of information recovery—he wishes to overhear Magua's plans, and to find out where the Hurons are headed. It is presumed that Chingachgook does in fact do this, and supplies the Delawares with information regarding Magua's arrival. Also: those must have been some big beavers!

CHAPTER 28

Magua, having reached the nearby Delaware village, leaves his fellow warriors in the outlying forests, and walks in, to a group of Delaware warriors seated in the main lodge. There, Magua announces himself as the de facto leader of the local Huron village, and he is welcomed by these Delawares as a crafty ally, if not as a friend—for this Delaware group maintains a distant truce with the Mingos and French, and also maintains some relations with the English, protecting most of all their sovereignty over this portion of the forest.

The political status of this particular branch of the Delawares is an interesting case, one that is not fully explained in the novel. It appears that these Delawares, led by Tamenund and not unlike Magua himself, attempt to wait out the colonial wars raging around them by playing one side, then the other, maintaining uneasy truces with both, and hoping that peace will come of it in the end.

Magua begins by asking the Delaware warriors how the prisoner Cora is faring. The Delawares say she is fine, and Magua, sensing the reticence of the Delawares, who perhaps do not trust Magua's intentions, provides a large number of trinkets, plundered from the massacre at Fort William Henry, to the assembled Delawares. This token of friendship cheers the Delawares, who speak more openly to Magua. Magua then asks if the Delawares have received among them members of the "band," including Hawkeye, Uncas, Alice, and Heyward—the Delawares then bustle about, realizing that one of the prisoners they have captured is "La Longue Carabine," or Hawkeye, the most famous scout in the region, of neither "red" nor "white skin."

Another instance of the fair treatment given to prisoners, much of the time, by native societies. When Cora and Alice were split up, both were given their own cells, and both were fed and were not treated harshly. Now, as before, the line between "prisoner" and "combatant" is easily crossed in native culture, and there have been moments when Alice and Cora's lives have been threatened. But in cases like these, when the holding of prisoners has a symbolic weight within a community, those prisoners are afforded relative comfort and security.

Magua then brings his Huron warriors into the village, where they assemble in a circle and wait for the elders of the Delaware village to enter and speak to them. The Delawares slowly aid their great patriarch Tamenund, who will grace Magua with his presence and speak with Magua about the prisoners. After Tamenund is seated and venerated by his younger Delaware warriors, some Delawares go to the village's prison-lodge and lead out Cora, Alice, Hawkeye, and Heyward, as the assembled Hurons and Delawares wait to hear Tamenund speak.

This is the introduction of Tamenund, who does not participate directly in the action of the novel, but who serves as an elder to his community and as a kind of narrator-within-the-novel. In the final chapter, Tamenund will deliver the speech identifying Uncas as the last of his people, as a noble warrior, and as a tragic hero bound for glory in the afterlife.

CHAPTER 29

The Delawares who have assembled—the younger warriors—ask which of the prisoners is "La Longue Carabine," owner of **Kildeer**, and both Heyward and Hawkeye say that they are; Heyward, worried about what the Delawares will do to Hawkeye, attempts to do all he can to exempt Hawkeye from punishment. But the Delawares, knowledgeable of Hawkeye's skill with a rifle, ask both Heyward and Hawkeye to shoot at targets to determine who is the better marksman, and therefore who is La Longue Carabine.

A last, exciting and "playful" sequence before the Main Event—the confrontation between Magua and the band. Although it is unclear how Heyward believes he can pretend to be Hawkeye for very long, Heyward nevertheless demonstrates his personal courage and his abilities as a marksman and soldier. Heyward, although he is an Englishman by birth and training, has improved in his understanding of the forest, in large part owing to Hawkeye and the Mohicans.

Heyward shoots very close to an earthen vessel nearby, but Hawkeye completely shatters it. In the next trial, Heyward hits a far more distant target, a gourd, but Hawkeye put the bullet so precisely in the gourd that the Delawares are amazed. The Delawares realize that Hawkeye is La Longue Carabine, and, this having been determined, the Delawares ask Magua to speak to the assembled crowd. Magua, with his skills at public speaking, gives a long talk about the history of man, in which he states that men of black skin are meant to serve as slaves, that men of white skin have colonized the lands of the Americas, and that men of red skin, the natives, though they speak different languages, are united in a common purpose because of their shared ancestry. Magua then defers to Tamenund, saying that it is time for the Delaware patriarch to speak.

Magua's history lesson, in this section, is an interesting display of native explanation and legend, and is an attempt to come to terms with one of the basic problems of human existence—why is it that God, or the great spirit or Manitou, created different people of different ethnic groups, different languages, and different religions. Magua believes that the "redmen," as he calls them, have a particular tie to the land of upstate New York, and that this tie was intended by Manitou. The white man might be able to defeat the natives in battle, but they cannot remove the natives' sacred bond with their land.

Tamenund, accepting the compliments Magua has bestowed upon the Delaware people, states succinctly that Magua may take the prisoners from the Delawares "that are his," and Magua, cheered at this news, eyes Cora longingly, and has Cora, Alice, Heyward, and Hawkeye seized and held in place by obliging Delawares. Cora, however, wrestles free of her Delaware guard and throws herself upon Tamenund's mercy, saying that the English there are prisoners against their will, that they only wish for safe conveyance home to their families.

Another of Cora's acts of courage. Cora understands that, because she is not treated as a combatant, she will be given free reign, to an extent, to argue her case before the council. This might be, perhaps, because elders like Tamenund are so unaccustomed to seeing a woman petition them at all, that they are willing to listen as a special case.

Cora also asks that Tamenund hear the words of Uncas, who has as yet not left the prison-lodge; that Uncas, a "red man" living and helping the whites, has more to say to the Delaware patriarch, and is of Mohican blood, a blood related to the Delaware clan. Tamenund agrees to Cora's request, and asks for Uncas to be brought out to the circle.

Tamenund's judgment, with Uncas present, will set in motion the events of the final sequence of the novel, in which Magua, Uncas, and Hawkeye meet in a major confrontation, in order to decide where Cora will be permitted to live—among her family, or with Magua.

CHAPTER 30

Uncas enters the circle and pays obeisance to Tamenund, who castigates Uncas for partnering with the Yengeese (the English), against whom this particular strand of the Delawares are opposed. Tamenund tells the Delaware warriors they may take vengeance upon Uncas for deserting his people, but when one Delaware rips off Uncas's smock, he finds that Uncas has on his chest a tattoo of a tortoise, the animal sacred to the Mohicans. Tamenund recognizes that Uncas, and his father Chingachgook, are both children of a band of warriors renowned among the Delaware people, the final two Mohicans from a long lineage of warriors who have moved from the eastern coasts to the woods of upstate New York, maintaining their culture in the face of English and French incursion.

Uncas's tattoo had not been revealed until his point in the novel, and indeed, his status as a Mohican only becomes truly important once Tamenund, the head of a part of the Delaware tribe, enters the novel. Tamenund represents a distant family link between the greater Delaware people and the sub-tribe of the Mohicans, of which Uncas and Chingachgook are part. And Uncas recognizes that his behavior reflects on the nature of his tribe—his abilities in war make the Delaware proud, and his defeat will cause the Delawares great sadness.

Tamenund therefore says that Uncas is one of them, and Uncas, in response, presents Hawkeye, "La Longue Carabine," an enemy to the French. But because Hawkeye is Uncas's friend, Uncas tells Tamenund and the other Delawares to accept Hawkeye as their ally, too. Magua and the members of the band then turn to Tamenund for his judgment: Tamenund says that Heyward and Alice, being innocent of any grudges between tribes, must be free to go; that Uncas and his friend Hawkeye, being of the Delaware race or allied to it, must have safe passage in the village; and that Cora, being called by Magua, a great chief, to be his wife, must go with Magua and live with him "in his wigwam."

From Tamenund's perspective, this judgments accords with a great history of native law, and with the idea that Magua has "won" Cora in battle and has held her in a captive state for some time. Heyward's attempt, later, to bribe Tamenund in order to bring Cora back to her father will necessarily fall on deaf ears. Tamenund's and the Delawares' honor is far more important than the amount of money, however substantial, that Heyward is willing to provide for Cora's release.

Alice and the rest of the band are aghast at this judgment, and Heyward says that he could surely arrange for Munro and the English to pay a large ransom on Cora's behalf. But Tamenund says that this justice is "inviolable." Hawkeye says that he will renounce his weapon, give up his fight against the Mingos, and go over to Magua's tribe as a prisoner in order to arrange for the free transfer of Cora back to Munro, but Magua, too, refuses this, and again Tamenund upholds the justice stating that Cora should go to Magua.

Hawkeye's attempt in this scene to exchange his own freedom for Cora's is perhaps his bravest act of the novel, and one that, sadly, cannot be accepted—not by Tamenund, and not by Cora. Hawkeye perhaps understands that Delaware justice cannot be altered, after the decision of the patriarch has been handed down, but he nevertheless tries to spare Cora's freedom.

Cora tells Hawkeye and the rest of the band that she would not have accepted Hawkeye's generosity anyway, that it is her lot to go with Magua. Cora then tells Heyward to take care of Alice, and follows behind Magua out of the Delaware camp. Heyward and the rest of the band are horrified at the thought of losing Cora, but Tamenund has so ruled, and the rest of the members of the band recognize that his justice and say are final, in the village.

Cora's refusal to accept Hawkeye's offer, even if it would have been possible for Hawkeye to hand himself over voluntarily, is another sign of her courage and bravery. Cora is one of the novel's strongest characters, and she, like Uncas, must pay the ultimate price for her strength in the face of danger.

CHAPTER 31

Once Magua disappears into the woods with Cora, and the sun has passed several hours on its course toward evening, Uncas raises a war-cry against Magua and the Hurons, and the temporary truce between the Mingos and the Mohicans, here enacted with the "exchange" of Cora, is now over, meaning that the band may again attack Magua and attempt to wrest Cora from his control. Uncas, Heyward, and Hawkeye gather their weapons, and Heyward places Alice safely among the Delaware women in the village. Uncas, Heyward, and Hawkeye then walk out into the woods, en route to the Huron village nearby.

An interesting, small lesson in native justice. Tamenund's decision applies only to Magua's and Cora's immediate departure from the Delaware village—once Magua has returned to the Huron encampment, Uncas and the others are free to attempt to wrest Cora back from Magua. These rules, though seemingly difficult to follow for the white settlers, are part of a complex native legal system, based primarily on unwritten tradition and the fact that Delaware justice does not extend beyond Delaware land.

Heyward and Hawkeye believe they see a Huron in the forest, but it is only David, who has wandered away into the no-man's-land between the two villages. Hawkeye asks David for all he knows regarding the location of the Hurons, and David says that they are nearby in the woods, that Magua has taken Cora back into the Huron village and placed her in the cavern formerly occupied by Alice, and that the Hurons are now preparing again for battle with the band and any allied native warriors, including Uncas. Uncas, Heyward, Hawkeye, and a large group of attendant Delaware warriors press on toward the Huron village in their attempt to rescue Cora.

Preparations for the final battle. Hawkeye, Uncas, and Chingachgook appear to recognize that whatever the outcome of this fight will be, it will be the determinant of Cora's fate. If the band manages to recapture her from Magua and to kill him, then Cora will be forever free—and if they fail, then Cora will, in fact, live the rest of her life as Magua's wife. Heyward, too, is prepared to fight for Alice's sister's freedom, at whatever the cost.

CHAPTER 32

Uncas, Heyward, and Hawkeye make their way through the forest, dodging bullets shot by scattered Hurons, who defend the woods between the two villages with a method of guerilla warfare. Heyward advocates a sharp advance against the Huron lines, but Hawkeye says that Heyward will have to fight like the Delawares, as this is the only way to beat the Hurons—using guerilla methods, hiding under branches, and engaging the enemy in short spurts.

Heyward has begun to learn how effectively to fight natives in the wilderness: primarily, by adopting their battle methods and techniques. Thus, Heyward, in sharp distinction to the English style of battle, attempts to hide himself, to shoot in brief bursts, and otherwise to move his way quickly around the enemy's position.

After moving forward and running up against Huron opposition, however, Heyward and Hawkeye hear shots fired from behind enemy lines, and recognize Chingachgook and Munro, who have been hiding in the woods away from danger—the two are making a rearward move against the Hurons, trapping the Hurons between the Delawares and killing many. Chingachgook and Uncas and Hawkeye exchange hellos, and Munro and Heyward greet each other after their separation of many days. The band makes plans, along with the Delawares, for another move against the Huron lines.

It is not exactly clear where Munro and Chingachgook have been the past several days, but the intimation in the novel is that they have simply been lying low, waiting to be reunited with the rest of the band, and, of course, waiting also to hear about Cora's and Alice's fate. Munro appears relieved to find that Alice is safely with Heyward, but, naturally, worries about what will become of Cora.

The Delawares push farther into the Huron village, and encounter Magua, who does his best to defend the Huron encampment, although the Delawares, having now overpowered the Hurons, kill many with tomahawks. Uncas catches sight of Magua and pursues him up a rocky hill; Heyward and Hawkeye see the white robe of Cora, who is also fleeing up the hill, and run after her. Uncas drops his rifle and prepares to fight Magua with his bare hands.

Cora's white robe is best read symbolically in this scene. White often embodies purity, and here, Cora is en route to a life lived with Magua, a life lived away from the people to whom she was born. Perhaps Fenimore Cooper is a bit heavy-handed in this sequence of the novel, but nevertheless the crisis and drama are palpable.

Heyward, Hawkeye, and Uncas find that two Huron warriors are in fact carrying Cora up the rocky hill, and that Magua is with them, directing the warriors toward "his wigwam" out in the wilderness. On the hill, Magua demands that Cora choose either to become his wife, finally, or to die. Cora says she will not marry Magua, and Magua raises his knife to stab her. But he lowers his weapon, unable to do the deed; at this, one of the Huron warriors, agitated, stabs and kills Cora while Magua looks on.

A terrible scene. It is notable that, until the very end, Magua wants to take Cora for his bride, and ultimately is unable to make himself kill her. He really did have feelings of a kind for her, adding to his complexity

Uncas rushes to separate this Huron from Cora, and, with his back exposed, and weaponless, Uncas is stabbed by Magua multiple times, and killed. Heyward and Hawkeye then pursue Magua, who jumps from ledge to ledge on the cliff on the far side of the hill. Hawkeye aims his **Kildeer** and, with Magua hanging onto a ledge, trying to escape, shoots Magua, knocking him off the ledge and causing him to fall to his death. Heyward and Hawkeye run to the bodies of Cora and Uncas, both lifeless.

A final "victory," however qualified, for Hawkeye. It is notable, too, that Magua's death occurs largely "off-stage," that he falls to his demise, rather than bleeding before Hawkeye and the remainder of the band. Magua body is not recovered, and there is no burial for him depicted—he will be mourned by the Huron villagers elsewhere.

CHAPTER 33

A funeral service is arranged for Uncas and Cora in the Delaware village, although the Delawares have also "celebrated," in subdued fashion, the nearly complete destruction of the Huron village. In the Delaware funeral ceremony, Munro sits with Cora's body in one ring, and Chingachgook with Uncas's in another. Tamenund, patriarch of the Delawares, rises to speak, saying that Manitou, the gracious God of the Delawares, has chosen to take Cora and Uncas at this time. A Delaware girl sings a funeral song and gives a speech praising Uncas and Cora, and Chingachgook sings a funeral dirge for his son.

A notable final "union" of Uncas and Cora. Uncas's devotion to Cora has only been hinted at throughout the novel, but in this sequence, which is itself the tragic, terrible opposite of a marital union, Uncas and Cora are laid out side-by-side, and their parents (Chingachgook and Munro), are brought together. One wonders if Cora would have been more amenable to marrying Uncas, a noble member of the native villages, rather than Magua, so clearly an ignoble one. After all, Cora held no prejudice against Native Americans, but rather against Magua's dishonorable tactics.

Munro then walks with the Delawares as they bury Cora's body on a small knoll nearby, in a Christian ceremony (in addition to the Delaware one just performed). Munro thanks the Delawares for all they have done on behalf of his family. Hawkeye, still "a **man without a cross**," joins with Chingachgook in watching the Delawares wrap Uncas's body in animal skins; he is then laid to rest in another patch of wood near the village, and Hawkeye and Chingachgook weep over his grave. Chingachgook, though devastated by the loss of Uncas, says that this "hunter" is now in the eternal "hunting-grounds" where he might find peace. Tamenund, in the closing words of the novel, says that, earlier that morning, he saw Uncas in all his youthful glory, a kin to the Delaware people. And now he is watching the burial of the last surviving warrior of the Mohican line, since Uncas was Chingachgook's only son, and they two were the only Mohicans to escape from the eastern coasts of the continent into the northern New York forests. The novel ends.

The final funeral sequence is rife with symbolism: again, primarily related to the idea that, here, native and colonial cultures are joined in the mourning of the dead. Hawkeye is the hinge between these two societies, and though he hates to mourn Cora, as do the rest of those present, it is a special tragedy for Hawkeye to mourn Uncas, who was so much like a son to him. Hawkeye will return in other books of Fenimore Cooper's "Deerslayer" series, but Uncas's final adventure has just been told. And this is another layer to the tragedy: that the narrator has no more stories of Uncas's heroism, steadfastness, and bravery to relate to the reader, who has long been accustomed to the noble deeds of the Mohicans.

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