

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Fenimore Cooper was born in Burlington, New Jersey, USA in 1789. He was the eleventh of twelve children. His parents, William and Elizabeth Fenimore Cooper, were Quakers¹. His father was a successful landowner² and he established the village of Cooperstown in New York State. When Cooper was growing up, he loved exploring the countryside and forests that surrounded his family's estate³.

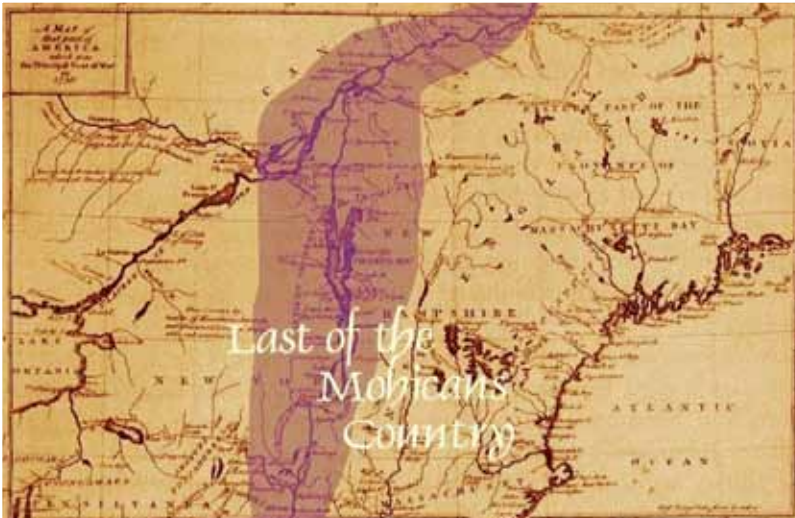
Cooper joined the Navy when he was 17 and traveled the seas for the next five years. He inherited⁴ his father's estate when he was 20, and got married when he was 22. For a while he made a living from farming. He lived comfortably and had time for activities such as reading. He learned about American history and about the lives of the Native Americans.



ABOUT THE BOOK

The Last of the Mohicans is set in the summer of 1757. This was the time of the French and Indian War, when the British and the French armies were both trying to gain¹ control of an area of West New York State.

Fort William Henry, a British outpost controlled by Colonel Munro, is under attack by the French General Montcalm and his Indian allies², amongst them the Huron and the Delaware tribes. Munro's daughters, Alice and Cora, are on their way to join their father. They are captured by Magua, a Huron Indian who wants revenge³ on his old enemy Munro.



BEFORE READING

- 1 Look at these pictures of three characters from the book. Who do you think they are? Where are they from? What are they like? Write five words or phrases to describe their character.



Chingachgook



Hawkeye



Magua

- 2 If you were going on a long journey, which of the men above would you choose to be your guide? Discuss your reasons with your partner.

- 3 Imagine you are travelling through the woods with your guide. Hostile Indians are trying to find you. Read the list below. Put a tick (✓) next to the things you should do and a cross (×) next to things you should not do.

- 1 Use your rifle to kill animals for food.
- 2 Sing, so you won't be bored on the trip.
- 3 Use a bow and arrow.
- 4 Hide your horses.
- 5 Wear your walking boots.
- 6 Leave behind any clothes you don't need.
- 7 Take turns with your companions to keep watch at night.
- 8 Leave the food you don't eat for the wolves.
- 9 Make sure you walk on the grass, not on wood or stones.



CHAPTER 1



Magua traveled for two hours from Fort William Henry. The Indian brave¹ ran most of the way, through thick forests and along hidden paths, to reach Fort Edward. He had important news from Colonel Munro for General Webb, Fort Edward's British commander.

'The French commander Montcalm is coming', said Magua. 'He is marching² now towards Fort William Henry.'

Magua's words brought fear to the people who lived inside Fort Edward and to the British soldiers who were camped outside the fort.

'Montcalm is a very great chief³', said the Indian. 'He has many soldiers and many Indian braves. If Montcalm attacks Fort William Henry, everyone will die. Colonel Munro will die. Montcalm's braves will take many scalps⁴ from the British soldiers. Colonel Munro needs more men and supplies⁵.'

The inhabitants of Fort Edward were terrified.

General Webb listened quietly to Magua's story. It was true that the war between the French and the British was savage⁶ and bloody. The two sides had fought each other for three years to win this wild and hostile country.

1 **brave:** (here) Native American

2 **marching:** walking fast like a soldier

3 **chief:** leader; commander

4 **scalps:** hair and skin cut from the heads of the enemy and kept as prizes

5 **supplies:** what you need to survive (food, drink, arms, etc.)

6 **savage:** (here) terrible; cruel



'How many men has Montcalm got?' asked General Webb. 'His soldiers are as numerous as the leaves on the trees,' said Magua. 'You must send many men.'

General Webb was calm.

'You are a brave man,' he said, 'Thank you for this message. I will call you when I need you.'

The following morning fifteen hundred of General Webb's men set off¹ on the journey to Fort William Henry. Ahead of them was a march of one day.

JOURNEYS

- ★ What is the longest journey you have been on?
- ★ How did you travel? By car? By plane? By bus?
- ★ What preparations did you make before the journey?

Outside General Webb's house, servants prepared some horses for a journey. People were curious and came to watch. Among them was David Gamut, a tall thin man with narrow shoulders and long arms.

'These are not ordinary horses,' said Gamut. 'They belong to important people, probably two ladies and an army officer.' The people in the crowd were very impressed².

'I'm a preacher but I also buy and sell horses, so I know about these things', explained Gamut. He turned to look at his listeners, but instead he found himself looking into the wild and frightening face of Magua the Indian. Magua was still covered in his warpaint⁴, and was armed with a tomahawk³ and a knife. The two men stared at each other.

At that moment a young army officer and two women came out of the house. Both women wore hats with veils⁵ that protected their faces. As the officer helped the younger woman onto her horse, the wind blew her veil aside.