

Teacher Lab

Lesson Plan

Topic of Lesson: Painting as Narrative and a Complement to Literature

Topic of Unit the Lesson is Part of: Literature of a New Republic: 1776–1836

Timeframe: 3–4 days

American Artworks on Which Lesson is Based:

(Primary)



Thomas Cole (1801–1948)
Landscape with Figures: A Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans," 1826
Terra Foundation for American Art, Chicago, IL

(Secondary)



Thomas Cole (1801–1948)
Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans," Cora Kneeling at the Feet of Tamenund, 1827
Oil on canvas, Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT. Bequest of Alfred Smith

Key Points—themes & ideas central to lesson and artwork:

- Power of landscape and its significance in American art
- Painting as narrative and Cole as storyteller
- Painting as a reflection of the times in which they were made

National Standards Addressed:

English Language Arts

Standard 3: Students apply a wide range of strategies to comprehend, interpret, evaluate, and appreciate texts. They draw on their prior experience, their interactions with other readers and writers, their knowledge of word meaning and of other texts, their word identification strategies, and their understanding of textual features (e.g., sound-letter correspondence, sentence structure, context, graphics).

Standard 5: Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

Standard 7: Students conduct research on issues and interests by generating ideas and questions, and by posing problems. They gather, evaluate, and synthesize data from a variety of sources (e.g., print and nonprint texts, artifacts, people) to communicate their discoveries in ways that suit their purpose and audience.

Visual Arts (Grades 9-12)

1d: Students initiate, define, and solve challenging visual arts problems independently using intellectual skills such as analysis, synthesis, and evaluation.

4b: Students describe the function and explore the meaning of specific art objects within varied cultures, times, and places.

6a: Students compare the materials, technologies, media and processes of the visual arts with those of other arts disciplines as they are used in creation and types of analysis.

Illinois Learning Standard(s) Addressed:

Language Arts

1A2a—Read and comprehend unfamiliar words...

1B2a—Establish purposes for reading; survey materials; ask questions; make predictions; connect, clarify and extend ideas

1C3c—Compare, contrast and evaluate ideas and information from various sources and genres

1C3e—Compare how authors and illustrators use text and art across materials to express their ideas

1C4b—Explain and justify an interpretation of a text

3B3a—Produce documents that convey a clear understanding and interpretation of ideas and information and display focus, organization, elaboration and coherence

Visual Arts

26B4d—Demonstrate knowledge and skills that communicate clear and focused ideas based on planning, research and problem solving

27B5—Analyze how the arts shape and reflect ideas, issues or themes in a particular culture or historical period.

Chicago Reading Initiative Correlation: X word knowledge X writing X reading X fluency

Student Objectives (Students will...):

- Analyze the form and content of a painting
- Extrapolate a narrative
- Read supplemental texts for fluency and comprehension
- Realize the significance of American landscape in painting
- Expand and reinforce grade-level vocabulary
- Create a pictorial narrative that illustrates a literary work
- Defend a literary interpretation and an artistic representation

Vocabulary students will learn:

| | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| auditor | giddy | sheath |
| contend | imagery | solemn |
| crag | impious | succor |
| dastardly | implore | suppliant |
| deign | latter | surpass |
| dense | landscape | tenant |
| earnest | literary | vain |
| endeavor | painting | valiant |
| enmity | monarch | vast |
| entreat | patriarch | venerate |
| extremity | precipice | wrest |
| fissure | reign | |
| foremost | revere | |

About the Artist:

- Life dates: 1801–1848
- Cole worked in many genres including: engravings, portraiture, literary paintings, landscapes, architecture and poetry.
- He desired to express moral and religious messages through his landscapes and poetry.
- His multi-part landscape series “The Course of Empire,” depicts the rise and fall of civilization.
- While painting “The Course of Empire” series, Cole became increasingly vocal and active about the effects that industrialization was having on the American wilderness.
- Cole’s friends included fellow-nature lovers, artist Asher B. Durand and poet William Cullen Bryant. He was a social acquaintance of James Fennimore Cooper, one of the first American novelists.
- Cole is considered the father of the influential Hudson River School of American landscape painting.

About the Artwork:

- Cole’s painting, *Landscape with Figures: A Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans,”* (primary image, page 1) was commissioned by James Alexander Stevens of Hoboken, New Jersey, in 1826.
- It is one of two works Cole painted on mahogany panels to decorate the main cabin of Stevens’ steamboat, and is one of at least four works by Cole inspired by James Fennimore Cooper’s novel, *The Last of the Mohicans*. (The painting in the Wadsworth Atheneum collection, secondary image, page 1, is another example.)
- The Terra Foundation’s painting depicts the scene late in the novel in which Magua kills both Cora and Uncas and just before Hawkeye shoots him in retaliation.
- In it, Cole creates a landscape that both mimics and dwarfs the human drama at the center of the scene.

About the Time Period:

- Cole's painting was commissioned in 1826, the same year Cooper's novel was published.
- The novel is set about 50 years before its publication, during the French-Indian War.
- By the time Cole painted the *Landscape with Figures*, the wilderness depicted in the painting was already partially lost to civilization.
- In the novel, there are multiple layers of conflict, including: European vs. Native American, Native American vs. Native American, Man vs. Woman, and Man vs. Nature.
- With the rare exception of Uncas and his small tribe of Mohicans, Native Americans are depicted as savages in need of civilization.

Texts, Web Sites, and Primary and Secondary Sources for Student Review:

(Items below are included at the end of this lesson)

- Cole quotation from "Essay on American Scenery" (American Monthly Magazine 1 (January 1836))
- *The Last of the Mohicans* (chapter 32, final scene, pg 398–400) (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003)
- *The Last of the Mohicans* (chapters 28 & 29, pg 338–359) (New York: Barnes & Noble, 2003)
- Terra Foundation Web site (<http://www.terraamericanart.org/collections/code/emuseum.asp> search for "Last of Mohicans" in the "Collection" section)
- Terra Foundation's "Painting the Story" (gallery guide for children produced by the Terra Museum of American Art, 2002, included with this lesson)

Other Materials/Supplies Needed for the Lesson/Unit:

Overhead projector, transparencies, laptop, LCD projector, dictionaries, art materials (i.e., scratch paper, heavy paper, graphite pencils, colored pencils, pastels, et cetera).

CLASSROOM ACTIVITIES:

Day 1 (Introduction/Motivation & Development)

Students will learn about Thomas Cole and his ideas about the American wilderness and landscape painting, realize the power of the American landscape in art, and see painting as a narrative.

STEP 1—Relay Student Objectives and Themes & Central Ideas of the coming lesson.

STEP 2—Show students a print or transparency of Cole's painting, *Landscape with Figures: Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans"* (find Coles image at the end of this lesson or online at <http://www.terraamericanart.org/collections/code/emuseum.asp>). Next have them read the Cole quotation from "Essay on American Scenery" (see "Overhead transparency, Day 1" at the end of this lesson) and pose two questions for brief discussion:

1. *What is Cole saying?*
2. *What do you think about what he is saying?*

STEP 3—Show students the painting again and have them do a short “free write.” Instructions for students: *Take a few minutes to look at this painting noticing the elements in it, the setting, and details. In your notebooks, record what you see and the words you would use to describe this painting. Explain your word choice. After you are done, we will have a discussion.*

Leave the image up for the remainder of the period.

STEP 4—Ask for initial observations from students; transition into a discussion/mini-lesson on landscape art that addresses the following questions:

1. *Where did your eye fall when you first looked at the painting? Is there a focal point?*
2. *How does the artist show us what is important?*
3. *What role does color play? What colors did the artist use? How did he arrange or place them?*
4. *Notice the artist’s use of contrast: Which parts of the painting are light? Which are dark?*
5. *What can you say about the use of scale in the painting—especially the size of the figures in relation to the setting?*
6. *Discuss the relationship between the setting and the action depicted.*
7. *What do you think the artist wanted to communicate?*

STEP 5—HOMEWORK (Students must have access to the image online or a print to take home in order to complete this assignment.): *Many artists tell stories through their work. Write a brief narrative based on this painting. Reflecting on your observations of the painting and the class discussion, write a story, remaining true to the painting. Do not include anything in your story that is not in the painting and try to incorporate as much from the painting into your story as possible.*

Day 2 (Development cont.)

Students will see Cole as a narrator, identify the relationship between his painting and the text it was inspired by, understand the painting as a reflection of the time in which it was painted, and use the painting as a context clue for defining difficult vocabulary.

STEP 1—Show students a reproduction of Cole’s painting *Landscape with Figures: Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans”* and leave painting up for the remainder of the period.

STEP 2—Review Student Objectives and Themes & Central Ideas.

STEP 3—Students should quickly share their narratives with a partner.

STEP 4—Ask authors of particularly strong narratives to share them with the class.

STEP 5—Explain that works of art frequently inspire us to imagine stories, and Cole used a story to inspire his painting. Provide students with description/discussion of the painting from the Terra Foundation’s Web site (see Day 2 Handout or

<http://www.terraamericanart.org/collections/code/emuseum.asp>). Have students read silently, jotting down any questions they might have. Explain that this interpretation is to prepare them for the next reading selection. Address questions quickly.

STEP 6—Provide students with a skill-appropriate reading selection—either an excerpt of *The Last of the Mohicans* (the last scene in chapter 32) or the synopsis of the story in “Painting the Story” (both included with this lesson—see Day 2 Handouts) and read aloud, taking the opportunity to discuss unfamiliar vocabulary and focusing particularly on the preselected vocabulary.¹

Guide students to use Cole’s painting as a context clue for definitions. For instance, after reading the sentence with “precipice” in it, solicit a definition from the students. Ask students to connect the sentence with the passage in the painting and to establish a definition based on the image before them. Have students make notes about words and their definitions.

STEP 7—Revisit the narratives students wrote based on the painting, and look for ways they were able to stay true to the painting and ways that they didn’t either by adding something that was not there or leaving something out.

Day 3 (Synthesis/Assessment)

Using what they have learned about Thomas Cole and his ideas about the American wilderness and landscape painting, students plan their own landscapes based on a passage from Cooper’s *The Last of the Mohicans*. Students are asked to solve the same problem that Cole solved—translating text into image.

STEP 1— Show students a reproduction of Cole’s painting, *Landscape with Figures: Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans”*. Review the visual strategies Cole used to depict the scene. Briefly address the following questions:

1. *How does Cole show what is important?* (strategic placement of lights and darks, the central placement and “lighting” of the figures)
2. *How does Cole organize his composition?* (major lines demark foreground, middle-ground, and background, high placement of the horizon line)
3. *How does Cole create a sense of distance and grandeur?* (small scale of the figures within the scene, distant mountains are paler and less defined than those in the foreground and middle-ground. Light and color are used to move the eye into the distance and back to the foreground.)
4. *How does Cole’s landscape reflect the drama of the story?* (stormy sky, flame colored foliage, jagged topography) Review Cole’s ideas about the significance of the American wilderness and how those ideas are reflected in the painting.

STEP 2—Provide students with a new passage from *The Last of the Mohicans* (see Handout Day 3, chapters 28 and 29) and explain that students are to depict another passage from Cooper’s novel, a passage that Cole also illustrated. Have students

¹ Vocabulary for the lesson pulled from the *The Last of the Mohicans* passage.

read the passage and use a dictionary to define any words that are unfamiliar to them.

STEP 3—Discuss student impressions of the setting, action, and characters described in the passage addressing the following questions:

1. *What is the mood of the passage?*
2. *What adjectives would you use to describe the setting, the action, and characters?*
3. *What elements are in the setting?*
4. *What colors do you envision?*
5. *What gestures do you envision the characters making?*
6. *How might you depict the setting to reflect the action in the story, just as Cole did in his landscape?*

STEP 4—Ask students to make several small sketches per page of landscapes that represent the passage from the novel.

Suggest that students borrow ideas and strategies from Cole (emphasis on the landscape and its grandeur, a setting that reflects the human drama, the use of a focal point, etc.) and have students lay in the major lines (including the horizon) and areas of dark and light and to sketch forms representing figures. Have them experiment with the placement of lines and forms from one sketch to the next. If colored media are available (watercolor, colored pencils, pastels, etc.), have students select and experiment with colors that reflect the action in Cooper's text.

Ask students to return to the text and to Cole's painting for ideas as necessary. For students who have difficulty with the exercise, it may be helpful to have available additional images of nature (photographs of mountains and other land forms, trees, clouds, rocks, etc.) for them to refer to. For help with representing figures, have students assume poses or make gestures suggested by the text and take turns sketching one another.

Day 4 (Synthesis/Assessment cont.)

Student's final assessment will include a large, detailed drawing depicting the scene with which they were provided from *The Last of the Mohicans*. The visual narrative should incorporate Cole's strategies and values about American landscape.

STEP 1—Ask students to pick one of their sketches to develop into a larger, more detailed drawing.

STEP 2—Distribute heavier paper and colored media.

STEP 3—Have students begin in pencil and make a larger drawing based on the sketch they selected. Encourage them to keep their lines light so they can make adjustments or erase as they go. Suggest that they go from the general to the specific—starting by sketching major lines and larger shapes and forms first then adding smaller details. Next have students identify the light and dark areas of their compositions. They can use the white of the paper for the lightest areas. Finally, have them add color, applying the lightest colors first and the darkest colors last.

STEP 4—When the students have completed their work, explain that they will see Cole’s painting of the passage after they have discussed their drawings. Post the work together on one wall of the classroom and have a class critique addressing the following questions:

1. *How did you relay Cooper’s text?*
2. *How did you incorporate Cole’s strategies and values?*

STEP 5—Show students the Cole painting, *Scene from “The Last of the Mohicans”*: *Cora Kneeling at the Feet of Tamenund* (from the Wadsworth Atheneum Web site http://www.wadsworthatheneum.org/learn/american-paintings.php?art_work_index=3

inspired by the same passage students based their landscapes on. Discuss Cole’s interpretation of the text and how it differs from or is similar to those created by the students.

STEP 6—Review Student Objectives and Themes & Central Ideas.

Questions:

- *What is Cole saying?*
- *What do you think about what he is saying?*

There are those who through ignorance or prejudice strive to maintain that American scenery possesses little that is interesting or truly beautiful...

But I would have it remembered that nature has shed over this land beauty and magnificence...

And, although an enlightened and increasing people have broken in upon the solitude, and with activity and power wrought changes that seem magical, yet the most distinctive, and perhaps the most impressive, characteristic of American scenery is its wildness.

Thomas Cole
“Essay on American Scenery”

Handout—Day 2

Excerpt from: Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans*. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003, pp. 398–400 (last scene in chapter 32).

“I will go no farther,” cried Cora, stepping unexpectedly on a ledge of rocks, that overhung a deep precipice, at no great distance from the summit of the mountain. “Kill me if thou wilt, detestable Huron; I will go no farther.”

The supporters of the maiden raised their ready tomahawks with the impious joy that fiends are thought to take in mischief, but Magua stayed the uplifted arms. The Huron chief, after casting the weapons he had wrested from his companions over the rock, drew his knife, and turned to his captive with a look in which conflicting passions fiercely contended.

“Woman,” he said, “choose; the wigwam or the knife of Le Subtil!”

Cora regarded him not, but dropping on her knees, she raised her eyes and stretched her arms out towards heaven, saying, in a meek and yet confiding voice,—

“I am thine! do with me as thou seest best!”

“Woman,” repeated Magua, hoarsely, and endeavoring in vain to catch a glance from her serene and beaming eye, “choose!”

But Cora neither heard nor heeded his demand. The form of the Huron trembled in every fiber, and he raised his arm on high, but dropped it again with a bewildered air, like one who doubted. Once more he struggled with himself and lifted the keen weapon again; but just then a piercing cry was heard above them, and Uncas appeared, leaping frantically from a fearful height, upon the ledge. Magua recoiled a step; and one of his assistants profiting by the chance, sheathed his own knife in the bosom of Cora.

The Huron sprang like a tiger on his offending and already retreating countryman, but the falling form of Uncas separated the unnatural combatants. Diverted from his object by this interruption, and maddened by the murder he had just witnessed, Magua buried his weapon in the back of the prostrate Delaware, uttering an unearthly shout as he committed the dastardly deed. But Uncas arose from the blow, as the wounded panther turns upon his foe, and struck the murderer of Cora to his feet, by an effort in which the last of his failing strength was expended. Then, with a stern and steady look, he turned to Le Subtil, and indicated by the expression of his eye, all that he would do, had not the power deserted him. The latter seized the nerveless arm of the unresistant Delaware and passed his knife into his bosom three several times, before his victim, still keeping his gaze riveted on his enemy with a look of inextinguishable scorn, fell dead at his feet.

"Mercy! mercy! Huron," cried Heyward from above, in tones nearly choked by horror; "give mercy, and thou shalt receive it!"

Whirling the bloody knife up at the imploring youth, the victorious Magua uttered a cry so fierce, so wild, and yet so joyous, that it conveyed the sounds of savage triumph to the ears of those that fought in the valley, a thousand feet below. He was answered by a burst from the lips of the scout, whose tall person was just then seen moving swiftly towards him, along those dangerous crags, with steps as bold and reckless as if he possessed the power to move in air. But when the hunter reached the scene of the ruthless massacre, the ledge was tenanted only by the dead.

His keen eye took a single look at the victims, and then shot its glances over the difficulties of the ascent in his front. A form stood at the brow of the mountain, on the very edge of the giddy height, with uplifted arms, in an awful attitude of menace. Without stopping to consider his person, the rifle of Hawkeye was raised; but a rock, which fell on the head of one of the fugitives below exposed the indignant and glowing countenance of the honest Gamut. Then Magua issued from a crevice and stepping with calm indifference over the body of the last of his associates, he leaped a wide fissure, and ascended the rocks at a point where the arm of David could not reach him. A single bound would carry him to the brow of the precipice and assure his safety. Before taking the leap, however, the Huron paused, and shaking his hand at the scout, he shouted,—

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

Laughing hoarsely, he made a desperate leap and fell short of his mark; though his hand grasped a shrub on the verge of the height. The form of Hawkeye had crouched like a beast about to take its spring and his frame trembled so violently with eagerness, that the muzzle of the half raised rifle played like a leaf fluttering in the wind. Without exhausting himself with fruitless efforts, the cunning Magua suffered his body to drop the length of his arms, and found a fragment for his feet to rest on. Then summoning all his powers, he renewed the attempt and so far succeeded, as to draw his knees on the edge of the mountain. It was now, when the body of his enemy was most collected together, that the agitated weapon of the scout was drawn to his shoulder. The surrounding rocks themselves were not steadier than the piece became for the single instant that it poured out its contents. The arms of the Huron relaxed and his body fell back a little while his knees still kept their position. Turning a relentless look on his enemy, he shook a hand in grim defiance. But his hold loosened, and his dark person was seen cutting the air with its head downward, for a fleeting instant until it glided past the fringe of shrubbery which clung to the mountain, in its rapid flight to destruction.

Handout—Day 2

Synopsis of *The Last of the Mohicans*, excerpted from a gallery guide developed for children by Esther Grisham Grimm, "Painting the Story," Chicago: Terra Museum of American Art, 2002.

Landscape with Figures: A Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans"

Written more than 175 years ago, James Fenimore Cooper's novel, *The Last of the Mohicans*, is an exciting adventure story set in 1757 during the French and Indian War. After meeting the author, Thomas Cole was inspired to use his imagination to create several paintings based on episodes in the popular book, including this tragic scene...

With storm clouds rolling across a troubled sky and dark, looming mountains in the background, the landscape is threatening. Shadowy valleys, craggy ledges, and dense autumn-colored trees close in on the scene at the center of the painting. Here, like a rocky island, a narrow cliff is nestled between two rising mountains and lit dramatically by the fading sun. Five figures, tiny among the vast and magnificent landscape, are caught in mid-action.

In his book, Cooper tells their story. Two half-sisters, Cora and Alice Monro, attempt to journey safely through the wilderness to meet their father, a British Commander, at his fort. They are escorted by three courageous men: their father's underling, Major Duncan Heyward; a scout named Hawkeye; and Uncas, who is known as the last of the Mohicans. In this time of war, their passage is hazardous. The British and the Delaware Indians, including Uncas, have banded together to fight against the French and their Huron Indian allies. After many clashes and near escapes, the sisters and their protectors find themselves in grave danger. Magua, a Huron brave, captures Cora and flees with her. The others pursue them through the dangerous territory. Magua wants to take Cora back to his home and, as they make their way across the mountainous land, he repeatedly asks her to choose between remaining with him or death.

In the moments before this scene takes place, Uncas, Hawkeye, and Heyward, in hot pursuit of Magua and his Huron companions, have just spotted Cora and her captors on a mountain ledge. They race to rescue her. Uncas leaps to the ledge, hoping to challenge Magua. But it is too late. Magua has asked Cora for the last time to choose between him or death. And she has responded that she will never be his bride. Magua raises his knife to slay her, but he hesitates in doubt. Seeing an opportunity to be rid of the woman who has slowed down their journey through the mountains, one of the Huron braves finishes the task for him. As Cora lies dying, Magua furiously goes after the Huron who has killed his beloved, but Uncas has jumped in his way. Magua stabs Uncas instead, and the last of the Mohicans falls dead at Cora's side.

Cole shows us the moment right before Magua meets his doom at the hands of Hawkeye. We can see the escaping Magua, who has hurtled himself to a neighboring cliff. Managing only to grab hold of its edge, he hangs there unsteadily. Hawkeye has just arrived on the scene and has raised his rifle over the bodies of Cora and Uncas to fire at Magua across the divide. Heyward stands on the left, helplessly pointing to the tragic view below him.

Handout—Day 2

Excerpted from the "Collection" section of the Terra Foundation for American Art Web site:

<http://www.terraamericanart.org/collections/code/emuseum.asp>

See Thomas Cole, *Landscape with Figures: A Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans"*

Interpretation:

In 1826, Thomas Cole was commissioned by James Alexander Stevens of Hoboken, New Jersey, to create two pictures on mahogany panels as part of a series of twelve such panels for the main cabin of Stevens's Hudson River steamboat the *Albany*. For the project, Cole was inspired by James Fenimore Cooper's newly published, popular novel *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826). *Landscape with Figures: A Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans"* was the first of four works that the artist based on Cooper's text. *The Last of the Mohicans*, the second of Cooper's *Leatherstocking Tales*, blends historical fact and romantic fiction at the time of the French and Indian War (1755-1763), as it recounts the efforts of sisters Alice and Cora Monroe to join their father, the British commander at Fort William Henry near Lake Champlain. Accompanied on their travels through the wilderness by Uncas (the last of the Mohicans), scout Hawkeye, and Major Duncan Heyward, their progress is thwarted by Magua, a leader of a group of Hurons who are allied with the French against the British. The painting depicts the climactic scene in which the hero frontiersman Hawkeye aims his shotgun at Magua, who tries to flee down a cliff. Cora Munro, after being kidnapped and brutalized by Magua, lies dying at Hawkeye's feet next to Uncas, who died trying to save the British woman.

In *Landscape with Figures*, the humans are dwarfed by an awe-inspiring vista of towering mountains and an expansive sky. The grandeur of Cole's autumnal wilderness of scarlet leaves and wild, rushing mountain streams overwhelms the narrative, reminding the viewer that there are greater forces in the universe than human conflict and desire. While at work on the painting, Cole had visited the settings of Cooper's novel, including Lake George and Fort Ticonderoga, but his interpretation transcends naturalistic illustration. *Landscape with Figures* is equal to Cooper's story in its epic vision of the American experience in which the virtues of the "noble savage" and the uncouth pioneer--who, paradoxically, will save the "civilized" English colonists--are linked to the pristine landscape.

Handout—Day 3

Excerpt from: Cooper, James Fenimore. *The Last of the Mohicans*. New York: Barnes & Noble Classics, 2003, pp. 338–359 (chapters 28 & 29).

During the existence of this scene, a man suddenly appeared at the furthest extremity of a platform of rock, which formed the level of the village....

....The eyes of the old man were closed, as though the organs were wearied with having so long witnessed the selfish workings of the human passions. The color of his skin differed from that of most around him, being richer and darker, the latter having been produced by certain delicate and mazy lines of complicated and yet beautiful figures, which had been traced over most of his person by the operation of tattooing. Notwithstanding the position of the Huron, he passed the observant and silent Magua without notice, and leaning on his two venerable supporters proceeded to the high place of the multitude, where he seated himself in the center of his nation, with the dignity of a monarch and the air of a father.

Nothing could surpass the reverence and affection with which this unexpected visit from one who belongs rather to another world than to this, was received by his people. After a suitable and decent pause, the principal chiefs arose, and, approaching the patriarch, they placed his hands reverently on their heads, seeming to entreat a blessing. The younger men were content with touching his robe, or even drawing nigh his person, in order to breathe in the atmosphere of one so aged, so just, and so valiant. None but the most distinguished among the youthful warriors even presumed so far as to perform the latter ceremony, the great mass of the multitude deeming it a sufficient happiness to look upon a form so deeply venerated, and so well beloved. When these acts of affection and respect were performed, the chiefs drew back again to their several places, and silence reigned in the whole encampment.

After a short delay, a few of the young men, to whom instructions had been whispered by one of the aged attendants of Tamenund, arose, left the crowd, and entered the lodge which has already been noted as the object of so much attention throughout that morning. In a few minutes they reappeared, escorting the individuals who had caused all these solemn preparations toward the seat of judgment. The crowd opened in a lane; and when the party had re-entered, it closed in again, forming a large and dense belt of human bodies, arranged in an open circle.

Cora stood foremost among the prisoners, entwining her arms in those of Alice, in the tenderness of sisterly love. Notwithstanding the fearful and menacing array of savages on every side of her, no apprehension on her own account could prevent the nobler-minded maiden from keeping her eyes fastened on the pale and anxious features of the trembling Alice. Close at their side stood Heyward, with an interest in both, that, at such a moment of intense uncertainty, scarcely knew a preponderance in favor of her whom he most loved. Hawkeye had placed himself a little in the rear, with a deference to the superior rank of his companions, that no similarity in the state of their present fortunes could induce him to forget. Uncas was not there....

....Thus singled, and directly called on to declare his object, the Huron arose; and advancing with great deliberation and dignity into the very center of the circle, where he stood confronted by the

prisoners, he placed himself in an attitude to speak. Before opening his mouth, however, he bent his eyes slowly along the whole living boundary of earnest faces, as if to temper his expressions to the capacities of his audience. On Hawkeye he cast a glance of respectful enmity; on Duncan, a look of inextinguishable hatred; the shrinking figure of Alice he scarcely deigned to notice; but when his glance met the firm, commanding, and yet lovely form of Cora, his eye lingered a moment, with an expression that it might have been difficult to define. Then, filled with his own dark intentions, he spoke in the language of the Canadas, a tongue that he well knew was comprehended by most of his auditors....

...Magua cast a look of triumph around the whole assembly before he proceeded to the execution of his purpose. Perceiving that the men were unable to offer any resistance, he turned his looks on her he valued most. Cora met his gaze with an eye so calm and firm, that his resolution wavered. Then, recollecting his former artifice, he raised Alice from the arms of the warrior against whom she leaned, and beckoning Heyward to follow, he motioned for the encircling crowd to open. But Cora, instead of obeying the impulse he had expected, rushed to the feet of the patriarch, and, raising her voice, exclaimed aloud,—

The Last of the Mohicans excerpt continued

"Just and venerable Delaware, on thy wisdom and power we lean for mercy! Be deaf to yonder artful and remorseless monster, who poisons thy ears with falsehoods to feed his thirst for blood. Thou that hast lived long, and that hast seen the evil of the world, should know how to temper its calamities to the miserable".

The eyes of the old man opened heavily, and he once more looked upward at the multitude. As the piercing tones of the suppliant swelled on his ears, they moved slowly in the direction of her person, and finally settled there in a steady gaze. Cora had cast herself to her knees; and, with hands clenched in each other and pressed upon her bosom, she remained like a beauteous and breathing model of her sex, looking up in his faded but majestic countenance, with a species of holy reverence. Gradually the expression of Tamenund's features changed, and losing their vacancy in admiration, they lighted with a portion of that intelligence which a century before had been wont to communicate his youthful fire to the extensive bands of the Delawares. Rising without assistance, and seemingly without an effort, he demanded, in a voice that startled its auditors by its firmness,—

"What art thou"?

"A woman. One of a hated race, it thou wilt—a Yengee. But one who has never harmed thee, and who cannot harm thy people, if she would; who asks for succor".



Thomas Cole (1801–1848)

***Landscape with Figures: A Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans,"* 1826**

Oil on panel, 26 1/8 x 43 1/16 in. Terra Foundation for American Art, Daniel J. Terra Collection, 1993.2



Thomas Cole
Scene from "The Last of the Mohicans,"
Cora Kneeling at the Feet of Tamenund, 1827
Oil on canvas
Wadsworth Atheneum Museum of Art, Hartford, CT.
Bequest of Alfred Smith