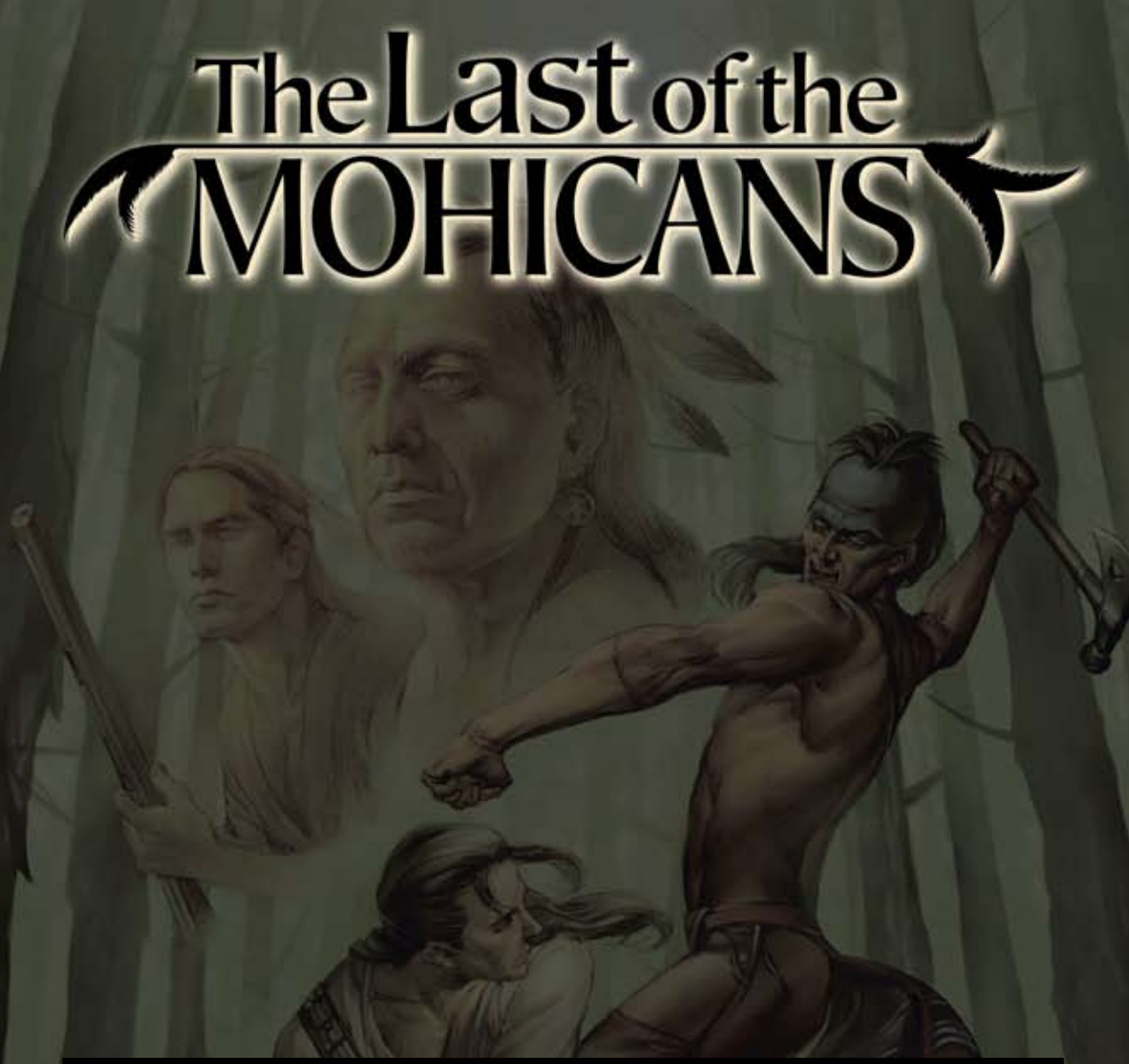

Book:
Marvel Illustrated: *The Last of the Mohicans*

Grade Level:
Grades 9 - 12

Literacy Standards:
Reading, Writing, Listening, Speaking, Viewing, Critical Thinking and Research

Cross-Curricular Applications:
Social Studies

Note: This lesson plan is meant as a project that teachers can use to enhance student understanding of key concepts of society. This project assumes that teachers have already assessed student comprehension of *The Last of the Mohicans.*

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Why graphic novel adaptations of classic books?

Students enter middle school and high school at a range of reading levels, and although many students are prepared to read classic and canonical works, a large number of students have difficulty navigating these often densely worded texts. Other students, who may have biological needs causing them to have difficulty with reading (such as dyslexia or ADHD) might also be greatly challenged. However, these texts are still necessary as they help students develop the background knowledge often needed to navigate newer literary texts, films, and even television programs. Background knowledge in canonical works helps students develop an understanding of intertextuality (the existence of links between one text and another text), helping them to critically engage and read any number of other texts (including advertisements).

Graphic novel adaptations of classical texts are not meant to supplant or replace the traditional print copies of the books. However, they help students develop an entryway into reading. As with other adaptations, including abridged versions of classical texts, they help students figure out what is occurring in a dense text by requiring them to find order and sequence in the illustrations. Vocabulary in graphic novels is usually less dense (though it can still have a significant level of complexity). As reading instruction tells us, there are three different levels of student reading ability, and these levels are based on the level of vocabulary, the overall concept, and sophistication of the structure of the text – their independent level, their instructional level, and their frustration level. Graphic novels are typically written at any student's independent reading level, helping them to develop successful comprehension of the story.

Graphic novels and visualization:

The illustrations help students better understand setting and character, helping them to distinguish between characters. The use of different styles of "balloons" help students differentiate between external speech (dialogue or spoken soliloquy) and internal speech (thought). Visualization is sometimes a strategy for reading with which students struggle, especially students with limited exposure to a variety of locations. Even successful readers may lose track of the setting as they continue reading. Graphic novels can show students what Ancient Rome looked like in each individual panel, helping them to continually "visualize" or see the setting. When traditional printed texts feature a plethora of characters, some of whom are described so as to be nearly indistinguishable from another, students may have difficulty remembering characters, following dialogue, or tracing actions. Graphic novels make illustrated distinctions between characters, helping students to keep track of this information. If students are capable of seeing or visualizing a text, they are also better able to move into other important strategies for reading. These strategies include previewing (with a picture walk) and anticipating, connecting (text-to-text, text-to-self, and text-to-world), questioning, and monitoring their own comprehension.

Graphic novels and advanced readers:

Independent graphic novels, developed by authors/illustrators which are unique storylines, differ from these adaptations because they tell original stories that can be used with any level of student proficiency – including advanced and honors-level students. Because graphic novel versions of classical texts are adaptations, many teachers may feel these texts should not be used with advanced and honors-level students. On the contrary, these adaptations are also helpful to advanced students, who can engage in more critical discussions about the illustrations (including an illustrator's use of line, color, and posture) and their connection to the text. These students are also capable of having discussions about the significance of the adaptation, recognizing and discussing how the adaptation becomes an entirely new text (which is a discussion students can also have with films). They can also discuss the ways in which these adaptations mirror or alter the central ideas (the theme and motifs) of a literary text and the significance of these changes.

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Graphic novels and engagement:

Students who are reluctant readers can also benefit when teachers employ graphic novels. Students become reluctant readers for any number of reasons and include students who are functionally literate as well as students who are a-literate (they can read, but won't). When students repeatedly encounter texts that are too challenging or at their frustration level (even with instructional support), they begin to see themselves as failures. When reading a graphic novel, most students begin to see that they are successful while reading.

Graphic novels also validate the reading interests of many students, including (though not limited to) young men. Some students resist reading because they do not see themselves in the novels (they are not novels which appeal to them or with which they can make easy connections), because they find the novels too simplistic and not engaging, or because the novels don't connect to their personal reading habits. These students will likely find graphic novels engaging, helping them to find a renewed interest in reading.

Graphic novels and assessment:

Teachers are still capable of teaching literary devices, such as conflict (internal and external), plot, character development, tone, mood, diction, and setting with graphic novels. Fictional graphic novels still contain the elements of traditional fictional pieces like short stories, novellas, and novels. Teachers are also still capable of assessing student comprehension of the story. Generating questions which are literal, inferential, and critical, as well as asking students to conduct retellings of the novel help teachers ensure that students have understood the novel. Assessing student understanding of sequencing can also occur visually, with teachers copying pages from a graphic novel and asking students to arrange panels to recreate the sequence of the story. Teachers can also assess miscues and analyze student miscues using graphic novels. As such, graphic novels become another form of text that teachers are able to use for educational purposes.

Why Marvel Illustrated:

Marvel Illustrated graphic novels differ greatly in quality from a large number of other graphic adaptations of traditional novels. These graphic novel adaptations are written and illustrated by comic book authors and illustrators renowned for their incredible work. The illustrations surpass most other graphic adaptations of classic novels because of the detail, attention to lines, symmetry, borders, body structure, and color. The high gloss finish, the color illustration, the intricate care in binding, and overall design are not only appealing to students, but also to instructors. As they were developed by a company whose readers continuously return to the pages of their trade paperbacks and comic books, the hardcover and paperback binding of these graphic novels, as well as the quality of the paper, ensure that they will withstand multiple readings.

Brian Kelley is currently a PhD candidate in the Language, Literacy, and Learning program at Fordham University. He earned his Bachelor of Arts in English and his Masters of Arts in Reading from New Jersey City University. He is also a certified English teacher and Reading Specialist in the State of New Jersey and has taught high school (grades 9-12, developmental skills-Advanced Placement courses) as well as college courses.

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The Last of the MOHICANS

Ordering Information

Last of the Mohicans
Price: $14.99
ISBN: 978-0-7851-2444-3
Diamond Code: JUL082396

The Marvel Illustrated books are available from all major book wholesalers and retailers throughout the United States and Canada, such as Amazon, Baker & Taylor, Barnes & Noble, Bookazine, Borders, Follett, Ingram, Partners West, and others. For more information, contact:

Diamond Book Distributors
1966 Greenspring Drive, Suite 300
Timonium, MD 21093
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The Three Musketeers
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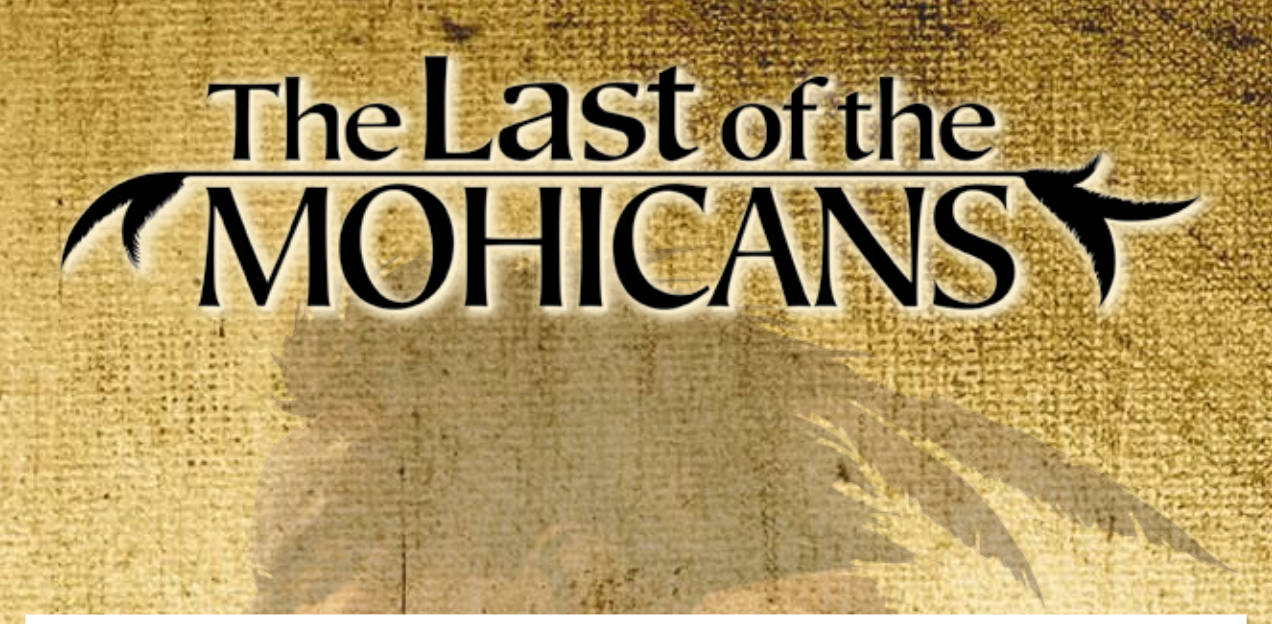

VOCABULARY

These words appear in *The Last of the Mohicans*. Though these words may not be central to the story, continued use will help students acquire an understanding of these words. You may choose to develop a list of words central to understanding and pre-teach those vocabulary words, based on your particular students' needs. These words may appear on a word wall or semantic word-web; however, they should also be used continuously in class discussion about the book. As this is a partial list, teachers may wish to develop additional or different lists based on student needs.

Asunder	**Gaudy**	**Mellowed**
Brethren	**Guttural**	**Nigh**
Cataract	**Hue**	**Province**
Clamor	**Imp**	**Scout**
Communion	**League**	**Sentinel**
Garrison	**Malignant**	**Wretch**

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STEP ONE:

INTRODUCING THE T-CHART AND VENN DIAGRAM

After reading The Last of the Mohicans, introduce students to the T-Chart and Venn Diagram strategy. Explain that the T-Chart and Venn Diagrams help students to graphically represent comparisons between ideas (you may need to model the graphic organizers if the students are unfamiliar with the activity). The major difference between the two strategies is that the Venn Diagram includes a bit of space for noting similarities. Explain to students why they might use the T-Chart instead of the Venn Diagram and vice versa. ***(Note: As you will see later, students will develop a T-Chart for developing a list of pros and cons.)***

To introduce the activities, create a Venn Diagram and a T-Chart on the chalkboard or white board. Ask students to make comparisons between the depiction of the Iroquois tribe and the Mohican tribe or the French and British characters in the graphic novel. You may also ask students to make comparisons between the characters Hawkeye and Magua. Regardless of whether you choose to have students make comparisons of characters, tribes, or the French and British, the goal of the activity is to help students see how they can visually represent comparisons.

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T-Chart

FRENCH CHARACTERS	BRITISH CHARACTERS

Traditional Venn Diagram (available through MS Word – Insert, Diagram, Venn Diagram): Note: Additional circles can be added to extend comparisons. However, when introducing this strategy to students, it is typically best to work with a comparison of two characters portrayed as opposites. This allows students to develop their understanding of characterization while they learn the strategy.

STEP TWO:

RESEARCH

After introducing students to the Venn Diagram and the T-Chart, have them conduct research on the different tribal nations of Native Americans. You may wish to limit the research to the Mohican and Iroquois tribes, or you may wish to extend the research to multiple tribes, asking students to explore each tribe's relationship with the European settlers. You may also want students to research the cultural differences that existed between the British and French settlers. It would work best to divide students into multiple groups to cover different tribes, different settlers, etc. Students will discover that many tribes conducted wars and developed treaties with one another, that some tribes warred with others, and that the British and French settlers treated (and mistreated) different tribal communities in order to exploit their own interests. (Students should be able to connect the events of The Last of the Mohicans with the events of the slave trade when European slave traders used the discord between African tribal nations in order to gain slaves.)

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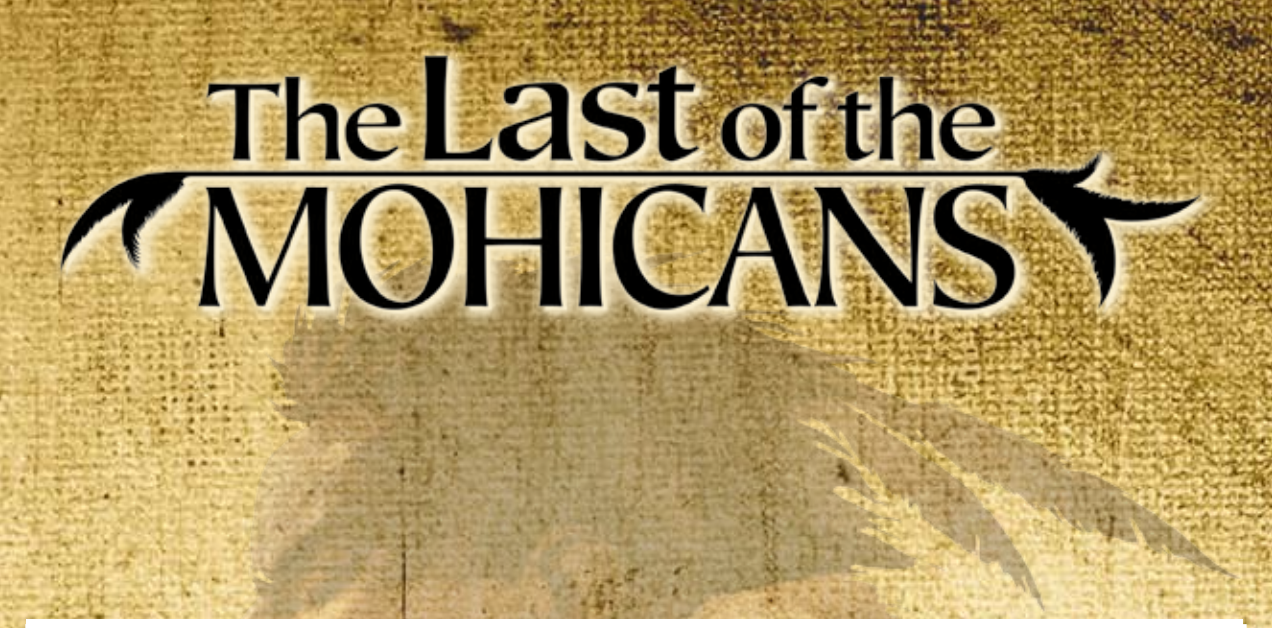

STEP THREE:

DOCUMENTATION USING ACTIVITIES

During the research phase, have students document their findings by asking them to record what they learned about their assigned group in the first column of the T-Chart or circle of the Venn Diagram. As students work on their research, ask them to discuss their findings with other groups. Ask them to document what they learned one other group in the second column of the T-Chart circle of the Venn Diagram.

After students complete their research, ask them to compile their information and bring their information to class for whole-class discussion. During discussions, students might realize that there are differences between the tribal nations as well as the European settlers. If students do not recognize these differences, you may wish to draw their attention to a few explicit examples.

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STEP FOUR:

DISCUSSING THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN CULTURE AND RACE

Many students need to be trained to recognize the difference between race and culture. A large number of people equate people who are vastly different based on their race. As an example, though there has been much historical conflict between the countries of China, Japan, and North Korea, and South Korea, many people assume that they share a unified culture because people from these countries are labeled "Asian." Not only are there profound cultural differences between people in China, Japan, North Korea, and South Korea, there are many cultures within those individual countries.

Students may have realized, while reading *The Last of the Mohicans* and conducting their own research, that there were multiple tribal nations of Native Americans and that tribal nations often nations warred with one another. They may have also realized that there were differences between French and British settlers who were also at war with each other. However, we commonly refer to these different groups by identifying them by their race instead of culture, causing them to be perceived as similar, and perhaps even "friendly."

To have students begin discussing the difference between race and culture, use a T-Chart or Venn Diagram. Ask students to extrapolate from their reading of *The Last of the Mohicans* and their research, what they think are the differences between race and culture (you may want to begin with students in small groups and move to whole-class discussion). Students will likely be new to this type of conversation and should be encouraged when they falter and make mistakes. Such discussion requires students to think critically to share their ideas with a group in order to collectively negotiate an understanding.

STEP FIVE:

PERSUASIVE WRITING

To help students prepare to write a persuasive essay, help them see the T-Chart as a tool for hashing out pros and cons. Remind students that to develop a comprehensive persuasive essay, they should develop one con for each pro and vice versa. Some students may have difficulty coming up with a con for each pro and vice versa and should be encouraged to leave the partner space blank (see below). The T-Chart will help students see connections between ideas. You may want to come up with an example (similar to the one below) as a model for your students.

(Note: The chart is meant to be an interpretation of how students may develop a pro/con T-Chart and does not represent the opinions of the author or Marvel, Inc.).

TO VOTE OR NOT VOTE

PRO	CON
Voting helps you express your opinion	
	Why vote when it's the decision of the electoral college?
Voting helps politicians understand what people are thinking	Politicians don't care about public opinion or they wouldn't do half of what they did

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STEP FIVE: *(continued)*

Prompt One (Developing Readers/Writers):

A parent picked up a copy of *The Last of the Mohicans* and was shocked by the depiction of violence. As a result, he formed a committee of concerned parents. This committee plans to petition the Board of Education to censor the book. However, none of the parents has read the book. Do you think these parents should be entitled to argue for censorship of the book?

Some points to consider:

What "say" or input do parents have in the school districts required reading?

Is it appropriate for parents to censor a book without having read it?

Does the book offer students some important historical information?

Prompt Two (Advanced Readers/Writers):

In *The Last of the Mohicans*, the French and British exploited the conflict between Native American tribal nations in order to protect their own interests. This has been a pattern of war for centuries, including the Cold War and currently in the Middle East. Do you think countries should exploit these types of conflicts in order to promote and protect their interests?

Some points to consider:

Should countries only worry about their own interests?

Does this behavior genuinely promote and protect theinterests of a country?

Should countries attempt to mend the conflicts between peoples?

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