

The long rifle in the last of the mohicans

Literature



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James Fenimore Cooper's interest in the aesthetic aspects of art has been commented upon by many critics (Blakemore). The introduction of certain elements in his most famous novel, *The Last of the Mohicans*, points to this very interest. This paper shall seek to analyse the symbol of the long rifle that is present within the novel that talks of the Mohican tribe in America. The long rifle becomes a symbol of the fusion of Indian and Western attitudes. One of the major reasons as to the defeat of the Indian tribes during the battles that they fought against the English colonisers was the inferiority of their weapons when compared to those of the English.

In the context of changing relations when Cooper wrote his novel, respect for Indian elements in the novel becomes a progressive move. This can be seen in the condemnation of religious conversions and the parody of puritan ideals.

Hawkeye thus becomes a symbol of hybridity in the fusion that he effects between the Indian and the Western. His being synonymous with the long rifle points to the violence that has characterised the history of the interaction between the two communities which led to the extinction of native American ways of living.

An analysis of the long rifle and its place in American history would be important for an analysis of the modern relations of races and tribes. It makes clear the role that history has to play in the way the future shall pan out.

Works Cited

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