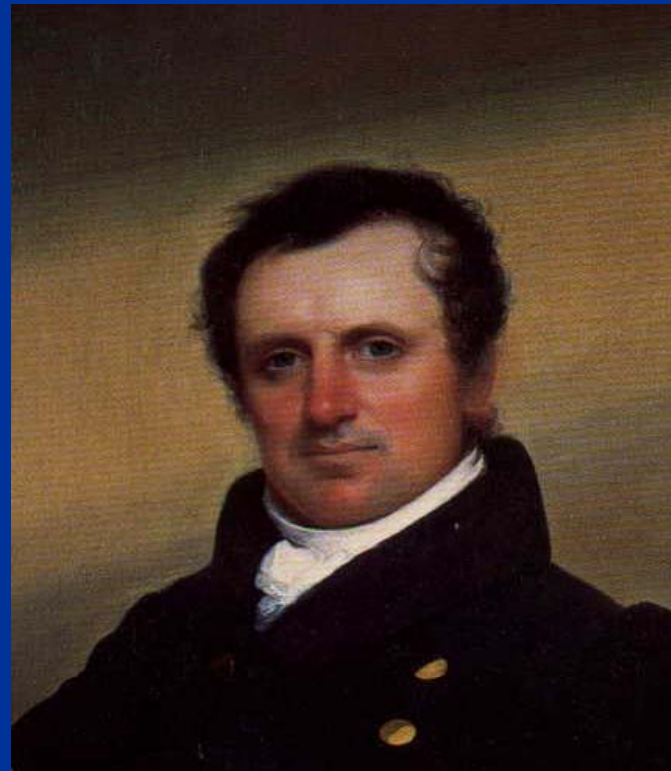
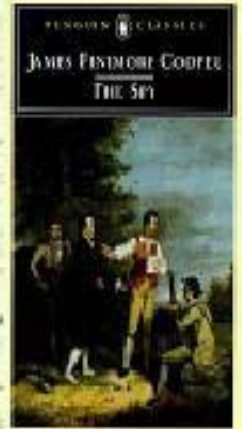


# James Fenimore Cooper



*Cooper's Footsteps...*



*Van Wyck House*

# Agenda

- Biography.....Alexis Malaszuk
- Historical Context.....Kelly Logan
- Influences.....Brian Carroccio
- Physical Description of  
    Van Wyck House.....Joanna Maehr & Kirsten Strand
- Major Literary Works.....Kristin King
- Lesson Plan.....Kelly Logan & Alexis Malaszuk
- Guidebook.....Joanna Maehr & Kirsten Strand
- Web Site Design.....Brian Carroccio & Kristin King

# James Fenimore Cooper Online



[Click here](#)

# Thesis Statement

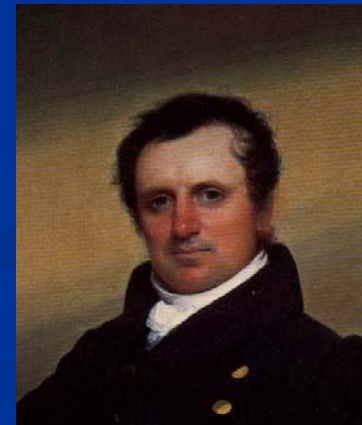
James Fenimore Cooper was one of America's first great novelists because he helped to create a sense of American history through his writings. Cooper was influenced greatly by nature and wrote about it frequently in his novels. Cooper was also influenced by and wrote about places in the Hudson River Valley, such as the Van Wyck House.

# Biography

## James Fenimore Cooper

(September 15, 1789-September 14, 1851)

- Born in Burlington, NJ, to a wealthy, landowning judge (William Cooper)
- Attended Yale University at age 13 but was expelled in his third year
- Sent to sea as a merchant marine
- Served three years in the US Navy as a midshipman
- Married Susan DeLancey in 1811 and settled down as a gentleman farmer
- The couple moved abroad, but he energetically defended American democracy while overseas

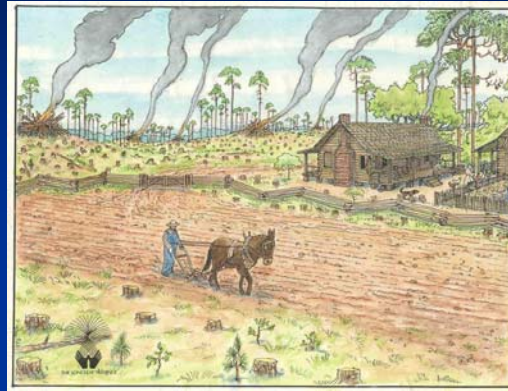


# Biography

- Cooper's views were considered “conservative” and “aristocratic” – made him unpopular as a social commentator
- His works were more popular overseas than in America
- His novels are said to “engage historical themes”
- Helped to form the popular view of American history
- Cooper died in 1851, and is buried in the cemetery of Cooperstown, NY



# Historical Context



- James Fenimore Cooper grew up during the dawn of the 19<sup>th</sup> Century, when Americans were occupying, clearing, and farming more land than ever before.
- After the American Revolution, “Americans experienced unprecedented and accelerating social and environmental changes” [1]



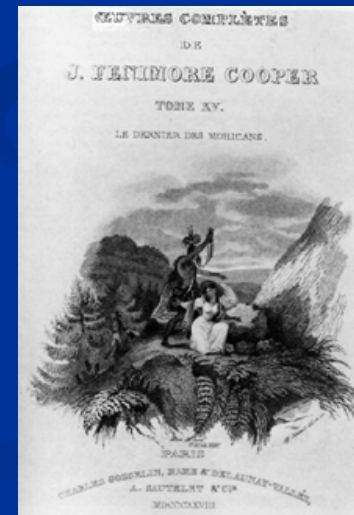
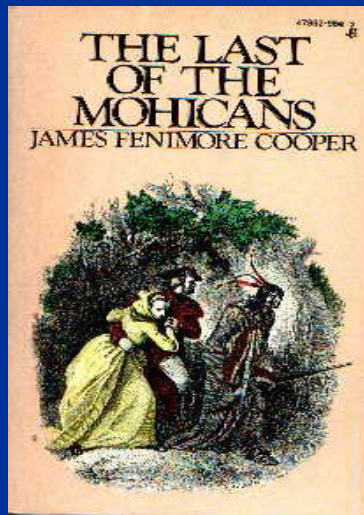
# Historical Context

- During Cooper's earlier years, the Six Nations were still strong, and Indian raids were common.
- "The wilderness was his earliest and most potent teacher" [2]
- He made a good income selling his works, but was greatly impacted by the Depression.



# Historical Context

- The Native Americans that Cooper wrote about impacted American fiction, but were wildly unrealistic.
  - Cooper did not have much interaction with Indians, and those which he described were unlike any that could be found.



# Influences



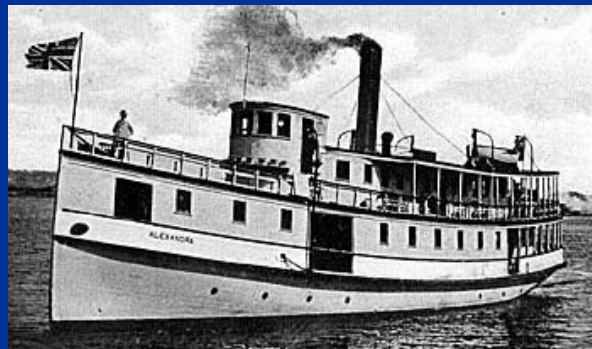
- Born in 1789, Cooper grew up in Cooperstown, NY
  - **Cooperstown:** wooded hills surrounding Lake Otsego
    - Settled by Judge William Cooper
- Cooper spent a great deal of time exploring the frontier, which had a significant impact on his writings.

# Influences

- Spent his youth partly on the family estate on the shores of Otsego Lake
- Roamed through the forests and developed a love of nature
- Nature was evident in many of his writings:
  - *The Deerslayer, The Last of the Mohicans, The Pathfinder, and The Prairie*

# Influences

- Post-Revolutionary United States (1780s – 1820s)
  - Many political writings produced during this period
- Industrialization changed the economy
  - Transportation flourished (building of roads, railroads, the Erie Canal, steamboats)
  - Farming was not as big of an industry as it had been
- The changing of the economy and government right after the Revolution inspired many political writings from Cooper
  - Ex. - *A Letter to His Countrymen* (1834)



# Van Wyck House

Fishkill, NY

1732 Dutch Colonial



- Requisitioned by the Continental Army as officers' headquarters.
- Military trials were held here
- Orders for the army were issued from the house.
- Visited by many notables including: Washington, Lafayette, Van Steuben, Alexander Hamilton, and John Jay.
- Used by the Quartermaster Department for outfitting Continental troops with clothing.

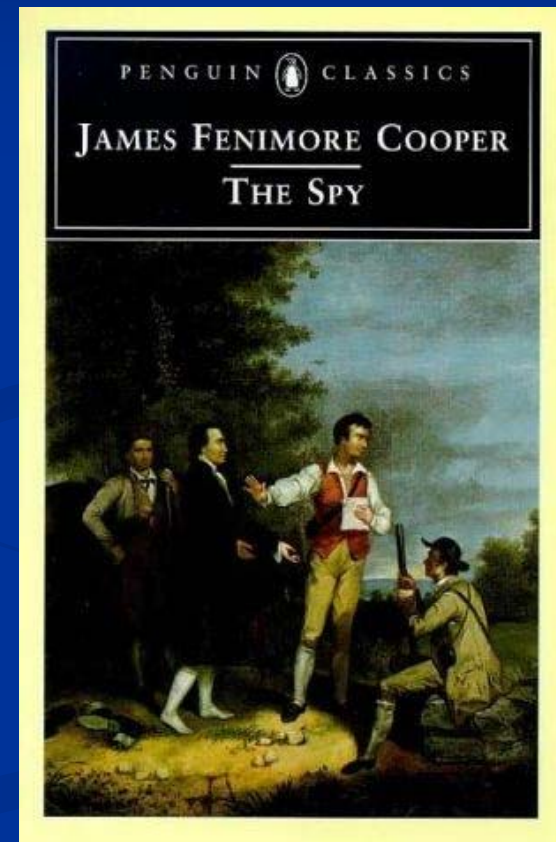
# Van Wyck House

- Setting for Cooper's novel, *The Spy*.
  - The real life spy was Enoch Crosby, whose trial was held in the house
- After the war ended, the house was given back to its original owners, and it stayed in the Van Wyck family for 150 years.
- The old barracks and huts were torn down
- Area's history has been forgotten by most people.



# Major Literary Works

- Cooper wrote more than 30 novels
  - Works include:
    - *The Spy* – 1821
    - *The Red Rover* – 1827
    - *Notions of the Americans* – 1828
    - *The Water Witch* – 1830
    - *A Letter to His Countrymen* - 1834
    - *The American Democrat* – 1838
    - *The Chainbearer* - 1845
    - *The Redskins* - 1846



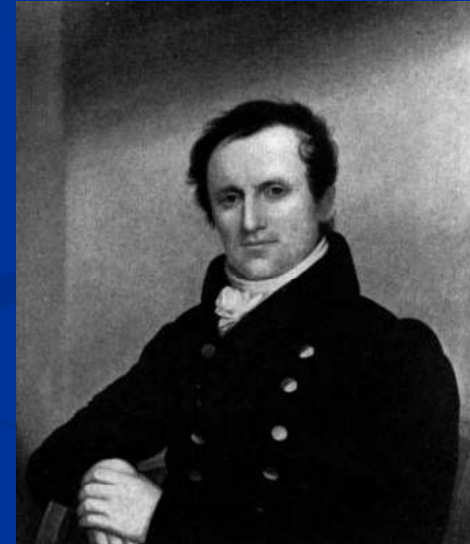


# Major Literary Works

- Cooper also wrote a five-novel series called the “Leatherstocking Tales”
  - Included: *The Pioneers* (1823), *The Last of the Mohicans* (1826), *The Prairie* (1827), *The Pathfinder* (1840), and *The Deerslayer* (1841)
  - Series is about an 18<sup>th</sup> Century frontiersman – Natty Bumppo – who lives free and “close to nature, while the settlers bring ‘civilization’ that destroys the wilderness” [3]
  - The novels tell of the clash that occurred “between the frontier wilderness and the encroaching civilization” [4]

# Conclusion

- James Fenimore Cooper was greatly influenced throughout his life by his natural surroundings. This environment impacted his writings, which continue to influence us today. Cooper's novels help to give us a sense of American history.



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-This site provides information about the Van Wyck House.

The following websites provided the pictures used in this presentation:

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<http://odur.let.rug.nl/~usa/LIT/cooper.htm>

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