

THE MOHICAN PEOPLE  
THEIR LIVES AND THEIR LANDS  
A CURRICULUM UNIT FOR GRADES FOUR-FIVE



We have these books

PART 5 *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO* ✓

TIME ONE OR TWO CLASS PERIODS

- OBJECTIVES**
1. Students will be introduced to the book *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO* written by a Stockbridge Mohican woman who presently lives on the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Nation Reservation.
  2. Students will find out why the book was written and why the author wanted to share it with young people.
  3. During discussions while reading the book, students will learn information about Mohican life — past and present — including issues of language, spelling of Native names and other words, Mohican values, pow-wows and other aspects of Mohican culture.
  4. Students will be encouraged to think of the different ways people can choose to struggle for their rights.

**MATERIALS** Class set of *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO* by Eva Jean Bowman (Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican)  
Teacher Resource Sheet # 5.1: Reading *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO*  
Teacher Resource Sheet # 5.2: Peaceful Warrior/Armed Warrior  
Activity #5.V: Letter to the Historical Committee  
Student Social Studies/History notebook for continuing outline

- PROCEDURE**
1. Be sure you have read Teacher Resource Sheet # 5.1 carefully before this class begins. This will help you offer the students some accurate information as background for their reading of *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO*. The purpose of this is primarily to replace children's stereotypical ideas about Native people with more realistic information.
  2. Review with students information discussed last time about the myth that Native people hardly participated at all in the Revolutionary War and where that assumption might come from. Then tell them that you will be taking them on a "guided tour" of the book before they read it. Pass out the books and, page by page, share with them the information on Teacher Resource Sheet #5.1.  
Since stereotypes are often based on non-Indians' historical and cultural images of Native people reflected in materials used in schools, you will be laying the groundwork in the students' minds for critical thinking and analysis. The words, phrases and ideas you wish to comment on and



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clarify will help them do two things: first, comprehend the meanings in the story and secondly, make sound interpretations of information that is new to them about Native people, their histories and their cultural expressions.

4. When finished with the guided tour, have students print *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO* on a new page in their notebooks. Make two points with students about Daniel Ninham which they will want to watch for as we read the book:
  - The Wappinger people lost their lands while their men were away fighting in earlier wars. Frazier writes: "The Nimham clan and nearly two hundred of their fellow Wappingers arrived [in Stockbridge] around 1756 for the protection of the women, children, and old men." Before their move they were more closely identified with the government of New York than with Massachusetts. But from this point forward, the Nimhams at least would be Stockbridge Indians" (p. 112). Daniel Ninham then tried to get their lands back, acting as a peaceful warrior for his people.
  - But he also became an armed warrior when he fought in the Revolution. Tell students we will find out if Daniel Ninham and his people ever got their land back.
5. Have students re-read the entire book, either individually, in pairs or in small groups. While they are reading, write Peaceful Warrior under the heading CHIEF NINHAM . . . and, about six or seven lines down, Armed Warrior. Those who finish early may go back and study the illustrations until all have finished reading. Then have students copy the two subheadings above and have them talk about what they have remembered that might be listed under each one. See Teacher Resource Sheet #5.2 for points that might be included.
6. It might also be interesting to allow the students some extra time to write down in their notebooks, each in their own way, their answer to the following question: What else did you learn about the Stockbridge Mohican people from reading this book and from the discussions we've had while reading? Afterwards, have them share their answers.
7. After students have finished their outlines and shared their thoughts about what they have learned, it might be a good time to present Activity #5.V to them (see last page of Part 5).
8. Collect the books and tell students we'll be going on to the next phase of Mohican history.





**TEACHER RESOURCE SHEET #5.1**  
**READING *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO***

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Here are suggestions for helping students read *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO*

1. **COVERS** Have students look at the front cover and notice the name of the author and the information on who the illustrators were. Then have them look at the back cover so they can, first, see the photo of Eva Jean Bowman and find out who she is and secondly, learn about Bowler School. Tell them that Muh-he-con-neew Press only publishes books about the Mohican people and their history and culture.
2. **PAGE iii** Ms. Bowman's Dedication is interesting. Who were the first people to whom she dedicated her book? Who were the next?
3. **PAGE v** Turn to page v and see the names of all the student illustrators with the name and page of each one's illustration. Six of these students are Native students. Can you tell which ones? You may get some wacky answers here. The point to be made is that it's hard to tell because many Native people lost their Native names over the years as they were taught by missionaries and other non-Indians. However, some American Indians are now using their traditional names; in fact, some of the Mohican or Menominee children listed here have a Native name which they were given by an Indian Elder or spiritual leader but which they don't use at school because their "legal name," given at birth, is used there. Others have a Native name given at birth and use it all the time and everywhere.
4. **PAGE vii** On page vii, Ms. Bowman explains how she came to write this book and why. After reading this with the children, have a discussion about her reasons for writing about Daniel Ninham and his Stockbridge warriors. Here we might take a moment to reflect on the title of the book we will be reading with the students. In its title, Chief Daniel Ninham is called a "forgotten hero." If time has been spent on the above arguments against the "myths of the heroes" of the Revolution and students want an explanation of why we are studying a Stockbridge hero, talk about that with them for a while. A couple of points might be made.
  - Because Native presence in the Revolution is only rarely mentioned in history books, Native heroes who fought are not likely to be discussed either. This is why the author was so pleased to find out that there actually was a Stockbridge leader who fought for and died in the cause of the colonists. Since she had never learned about him in school and knew little or nothing about him before her college course, she chose the term "forgotten hero" for the reasons she explains.







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- Notice that the author thinks especially about the children who don't know much about their history or their Mohican heroes. (Many do, of course, because their parents have told them stories about Mohicans who came before them.) Ask: Why do you think Ms. Bowman wants Mohican children to learn some of their history? Encourage students to think about this question and try to answer. The reasons are the same as those for any other children: to know stories about their ancestors who were strong and courageous; to be proud of who they are and have pride in their background; to be able to share their stories with others who don't know them; to learn stories they don't usually find in their books in school; to understand that their ancestors have as important a place in American history as anyone else's and so on.
- Have children check back to Student Resource Sheet #2.2 where the "Many Trails" map is shown. Point out the various lines that show the routes the Stockbridge took to finally reach Wisconsin after 200 years of being forced to move from one place to another. Ms. Bowman refers to those journeys and to all that is lost as a result of the many moves, including the storytellers (historians) who died along the way. More on that later . . .

5. **PAGE viii** Before starting to read the text, have students study the map on page viii. Note that Daniel Ninham's people lived just to the south of the Mohicans. Because their language and customs were very much like those of the Mohicans, they were called their relatives. Also review what the Mahicannituck is called today and what the state is now called where the Muh-he-con-neok had been living for centuries before the Europeans arrived.

Here are some suggestions for reading the text of *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO*

6. Tell students that this is a book for smaller children so they should find the reading easy. As they read they should be looking for evidence of how Daniel Ninham was, first, a peaceful warrior in his fight to get back his people's land and secondly, why he might have changed to being an armed warrior on the side of the colonists.

Now you are ready for a page-by-page discussion with students on the pages of text:

**Page 1, first footnote** The name Ninham, which the book uses, is spelled in its current form, out of respect for the members of the Ninham family who live in Wisconsin today. In Daniel's time, the spelling was Nimham and pronounced NIM um as the English colonists, and those **who** learned English from them, would have pronounced it.

**Second footnote** Names for Native places, rivers and so on come from an oral or spoken tradition, so that when they were written out on paper by non-Indian people they were given spellings that they "heard" and wrote down. Thus we often find different spellings for the same word or name.

**Page 3** "Chief" is an English word meaning leader or headman. It was not a word based on a Native word, as are some others like wigwam, papoose and succotash, all of which are Algonquian words recognized and used in American English. Two Algonquian words for leader are sachem and sagamore, both of which were used by the Mohicans. (Since Algonquian "refers to a whole group of languages spoken by certain Native peoples," some students might like to look in the dictionary and see if a specific Native language is mentioned for any of these words.) Unfortunately, Indian





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men — often those serving in the military — are called "Chief" by non-Indians who just want to be funny, but some Native people think that this is more like name-calling.

**Pages 12-18** Many Native people have carried on this tradition of living with the seasons by eating what can be grown (corn, beans, squash and other vegetables) or gathered (berries, nuts, sap for syrup and sugar) or hunted and fished. Many non-Native people also try to live this way not only to save money and spend lots of time in the outdoors but also to honor Mother Earth and all her gifts to us.

**Page 21** Elders have a very special place in Native American communities that keep that tradition alive. Respect is shown to them in many ways: driving them places, making meals for them, dropping in to see what they might need, not interrupting them when they talk, opening doors, and so on.

**Page 22-27** These pages outline Ninham's reasons for fighting on the side of the colonists.

Actually, his son Abraham had requested early in 1778 that all the Stockbridge warriors be allowed to fight together in what became the "Indian Company." The request was granted. It might be a good idea to tell students that, though Abraham was the captain of the company and their rightful leader, it was the Elder, his father Daniel, who tried to get the younger warriors to leave the battle as he stayed in the fight and died there. As we know, many did stay with the Elder Ninham and fought and died with him. No one really knows exactly how many.

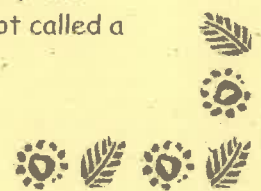
**On pages 26 and 28**, the illustrations are of the Battle of Van Cortlandt's Woods. The fourth grade illustrators were instructed that the Englishmen wore three-cornered hats and red coats and on **page 26** we see one of them down and the other up shooting his musket. The Native warriors were described by a Hessian mercenary fighting for the British as wearing a top tunic, leggings, moccasins, a belt with an ammunition pouch and a battle-ax, with a quiver of arrows on their backs and carrying a musket. ". . . (O)n their heads only the hair of the crown remained standing in a circle the size of a dollar-piece, the remainder being shaved off bare" (Walling, p. 15). As can be seen, the illustrators did very well remembering those descriptions, but student readers might want to know what is being portrayed.

**Page 31** Have students find, first, the site of the Battle of Van Cortlandt's Woods and then Putnam County, where most of the Wappinger land was located. In a drive today this would be a distance of about 30-40 miles.

**Pages 38-41** Students may remember that Ms. Bowman states in her preface that Daniel Ninham "is not a forgotten hero in his homeland of New York." These pages show three of the monuments dedicated to him in the State of New York — the monument in Van Cortlandt Park and the other two in Putnam County. See if students can find references in the messages on these three monuments to what they already know about Chief Ninham's life and struggles for his lands.

NOTE: In recent years a Massachusetts sculptor has been seeking funding for a 12-foot statue of Daniel Ninham to be erected in the Town of Kent in New York State. Unfortunately, his planned depiction differs significantly from the description quoted by Richard Walling (see p. 26 reference above) and used by the illustrators in *CHIEF NINHAM: FORGOTTEN HERO*. It has Ninham in breech clout and leggings but without other clothing, having feathers in his hair and in the stereotypically stealthy pose of the "Indian warrior."

**Pages 42-43** Pow-wows are a time of festivities for Native people. There are always drums and singers, as well as many dancers. Tell students that the clothing worn by the dancers is not called a





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"costume" but rather regalia. Their various parts are often made with great care by relatives and other special people for the dancer, considered very precious and meaningful and cared for with great respect.

Also at pow-wows there is plenty of food, things to buy and lots of visiting with relatives and friends. Since the mid-70s the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohicans have held a pow-wow every year to honor all Native and other veterans. There are usually ceremonies to honor those veterans who have served both this country and their Native Nations. Veterans come from all over the country to accept this honor and to join with the others to show respect to the flags of all the Nations represented.

The photo on page 42 shows the Mohican Veterans entering the dance arena carrying their flags, followed by veterans from other Nations and then the dancers, at the 22nd Annual Mohican Veterans Pow-wow in 1998. Mohican combat veterans lead the others, one carrying the Mohican Eagle Staff. (Just the top shows behind the Mohican Nation flag in this photo; a better photo of the eagle staff is in the collage on Student Resource Sheet #7.1 in Part 7.)







TEACHER RESOURCE SHEET #5.2  
PEACEFUL WARRIOR/ARMED WARRIOR

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Here is a list of what students may include in their reading about Ninham's attempts to get back his people's lands. The purpose of this exercise is to demonstrate how some persons choose to "fight" for their rights by peaceful means and others go to armed warfare. This could be a very relevant discussion for fourth or fifth graders, depending on the status of this country at the time this is taught.

Daniel Ninham as a Peaceful Warrior

1. He had the respect of his people and was called "chief" (probably *sachem* in their language), a title of respect. When he found colonists living on Wappinger land, he decided to get their land back through legal, that is, peaceful means.
2. He wrote a protest letter to colonists' leaders.
3. He traveled to New York City. (Sorry, the book does not say that he went to the court there but he did and the colonial court did not help.)
4. He and other Mohicans went to England and saw the king, who said he would try but could not help either.
5. In the end, when the colonists did not recognize the Wappingers' deeds to their lands, only the ones they had, Daniel and his people knew that they had really lost their land forever.

Daniel Ninham as an Armed Warrior

1. Daniel had fought in earlier wars for the British.
2. He responded "yes" to a request from colonists to fight for them in the Revolution.
3. He said "yes" maybe because he thought that he could get his lands back by fighting for the colonists.
4. He fought in the Battle of Van Cortlandt's Woods not for from Wappinger lands.
5. He fought bravely but ordered his young warriors to save themselves when he saw they were losing the battle.
6. He said that he would die there — and he did — along with a number of his warriors who stayed and fought with him.





ACTIVITY 5.V  
LETTER TO HISTORICAL COMMITTEE

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**Focus** To communicate what students have learned about Mohicans so far  
**Materials** Three pieces of flip chart paper and something to write with  
**Level** Grades 4 and 5

**Framing** Tell students that we (the class) will be writing a letter to the Stockbridge-Munsee/Mohican Historical Committee. This letter is to help students identify and communicate the myths they had and what they have learned.

**Suggested Procedure**

1. Write each statement on a piece of flip chart paper.  
Some myths about Mohican history or things we did not know are . . .  
We learned . . .  
We will not forget the Indian Company of 1778 and Chief Ninham because . . .
2. Divide students into three groups and give one of the above statements to each group.
3. Instruct each group to write at least four responses to the statement.
4. After responses are complete, each group will have representative(s) present responses to class.
5. Facilitate additional responses from the class to be included in the letter.
6. Class can discuss and decide how and who will write the letter to the Mohican Historical Committee.

**Facilitation Notes**

This activity will help your students reflect on what they have learned so far. In this way students get an opportunity to state what they used to believe and can show what they have learned. In addition, they can discuss how their perspectives of Mohican People (and possibly American Indian People in general) may have changed because they now have more information.

Please include information about your classroom and the students. **You might want to keep this letter until later in case you wish to add more before mailing.**

The Mohican Historical Committee is a group of mostly tribal members whose mission is to identify, gather, and preserve materials about the Mohican People. These materials are stored in the archives of the Arvid E. Miller Memorial Library Museum, on the reservation of the Mohican Nation in Wisconsin. Address: Stockbridge-Munsee/Mohican Historical Committee, PO Box 70, Bowler, WI 54416

