The War of 1812

BLUF: The War of 1812 was the first real military test for the United States as an independent republic. Sometimes referred to as the Second War of American Independence, the conflict was fought between the U.S. and Great Britain from 1812 to 1815. American military forces fought the British on American soil, the Great Lakes, and the high seas during the war. On 24 December 1814, the Treaty of Ghent was signed by the warring nations. Though considered a military draw, the war results unleashed a long period of American nationalism and a newfound comradery between the U.S. and Great Britain.

GENERAL STORY: The primary cause of the War of 1812 was both sides' failure to abide by the terms of the Treaty of Paris of 1783. Between 1799 and 1812, the British impressed American sailors into the Royal Navy to bolster their ranks during the Napoleonic Wars. Despite American diplomatic protests, British impressment and interference with American shipping increased in 1811 and 1812. On 18 June 1812, the U.S. formally declared war on Great Britain.

The war was not popular in the New England states or Great Britain. American attempts to invade and seize Canada failed early in the war. The Americans, however, gained a great victory over the British Navy on Lake Erie in 1813. With the defeat of British Indian ally Tecumseh in the West, the U.S. secured the Great Lakes and western territories by the end of 1813. The British went on the offensive in 1814, sailing up the Chesapeake Bay and burning the American capital. However, the British Army was halted on the outskirts of Baltimore when the British Navy failed to seize the Baltimore harbor. Because of rising war expenses and stalemates on the battlefield, the two sides signed a peace treaty in Ghent, Belgium, at the end of 1814. The last military engagement of the war, however, was at New Orleans on 8 January 1815. It resulted in an American victory and a new respect for the U.S. from world powers.

MARINE STORY: The Marine Corps continued its tradition as sea soldiers on board American ships. At the Battle of Bladensburg in 1814, Marines put up a stubborn land defense on the doorstep of Washington, D.C. Though overwhelmed by superior British numbers, the Marines were the last Americans to leave the battlefield. However, the story that the British did not burn the Marine Corps Barracks in Washington out of respect for the Marines at Bladensburg is untrue. At the Battle of New Orleans, Marines were front and center during the action.

QUESTIONS
1. Why is the War of 1812 considered the Second War of American Independence?
2. Why was the war not popular in all American states?
3. Why did the war create a strong sense of American nationalism, though it was not a complete military victory?

SELECTED BIBLIOGRAPHY