

prize
hero

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DISCUSSION & REVIEW QUESTIONS:

- At the beginning of the video Mr. Kilmeade reminds us that, “The United States had to fight not one, but two wars for its independence. The first, of course, was the Revolutionary War. Can you name the second? It was the War of 1812. Both wars were against the British. And in both cases the Americans should have lost.” Why do you think that the U.S. had to fight two wars for independence? Why should the Americans have lost both wars? Explain.
- Mr. Kilmeade goes on to note that, “The Revolutionary War is very much celebrated in American history. The second one has all but been forgotten. But had it been lost, America’s history would have been much, much different.” Why do you think that the War of 1812 is so lost in the American consciousness compared to the Revolutionary War? Explain. In what ways do you think that America’s history would have been significantly different had the British won? Explain.
- Mr. Kilmeade later points out that, “Though he had no formal military training, Jackson was elected major general of the Tennessee militia and gained fighting experience leading several successful campaigns against the Indians of the region. He inspired both great loyalty and great fear in the men under his command: loyalty because he fought beside them, enduring every hardship they endured; and fear because he demanded strict military discipline. Given the inherently rebellious, ‘don’t tread on me’ nature of the frontiersmen under his command, this was no mean feat.” What leadership qualities do you think Jackson possessed and employed in order to be so successful? Explain. Do you think that the Native Americans killed in the campaigns that Jackson led against them can be credited to some degree with helping to save the U.S.? Why or why not?
- Later in the video, Mr. Kilmeade explains that, “...Jackson had never faced a foe like the British: a highly disciplined, battle-tested army. On his side of the ledger, the American general had a motley assortment of volunteers, militiamen, freemen of color, Indians, and regulars. Joined by legendary New Orleans pirate Jean Lafitte and his pirate band, the American force was still less than half of what the British had in numbers and far less in combat experience... When it was over it amounted to the worst defeat in British military history. No two accounts of the battle would agree on the exact casualty count, but all agreed it was stunningly high. According to one British infantry captain, ‘three generals, seven colonels, seventy-five officers... a total of seventeen hundred and eighty-one officers and soldiers, had fallen in a few minutes.’ The American losses amounted to no more than a dozen dead.” How do you think that Jackson was able to get such a disparate group to be able to work together towards a common goal? Considering the sorry state of the U.S. forces, how do you think that the U.S. was able to win such a stunning defeat?
- At the conclusion of the video, Mr. Kilmeade notes that, “The War of 1812, America’s second war of independence, began badly and only got worse. But it ended with one the greatest victories in American military history. It made Jackson a national hero and set up his successful run for the presidency thirteen years later. Even more, it guaranteed that the Western expansion of the United States would proceed without interruption.” Do you think that Andrew Jackson should be lauded as a hero? Why or why not? What kind of value judgment do you place on this last point- in other words, do you think that accelerating the expansion of the U.S. westward ‘without interruption’ was good or bad? Explain.

EXTEND THE LEARNING:

CASE STUDY: The Battle of New Orleans

INSTRUCTIONS: Read the article “Battle of New Orleans,” then answer the questions that follow.

- What was happening in Belgium in December of 1814? Why was Andrew Jackson called ‘Old Hickory?’ What was the real agenda of the British, in terms of warring against the old colonies? How did Andrew Jackson prepare for the upcoming battle in New Orleans? What was ‘Line Jackson?’ Who was Edward Pakenham? What was Pakenham’s plan? Where did the British retreat to? What did Andrew Jackson say after the battle was over?
- What factors led to the defeat of the British? In what ways do you think that Andrew Jackson’s personal vendetta against the British helped him to be so successful in this particular encounter, if any? Do you think that Andrew Jackson’s horrible treatment of Native Americans, both prior to and during his presidency, should take away from his brilliant military accomplishments? Why or why not?
- Between watching the video and reading this article, what did you learn about this chapter in U.S. history that you didn’t know before? In what ways have your views about Andrew Jackson changed, if at all? Explain.



QUIZ

AMERICA'S 2ND WAR OF INDEPENDENCE

1. What was the first war the United States fought for its independence?
 - a. The Revolutionary War
 - b. The French Revolution
 - c. The Mexican American War
 - d. The War of 1812

2. What great prize of the war did Britain want?
 - a. Washington D.C.
 - b. New Orleans
 - c. Boston
 - d. Atlanta

3. Which of the following precipitated the War of 1812?
 - a. The British repeatedly disrupting American commerce.
 - b. The British boarding American merchant ships and capturing their sailors.
 - c. The British failing to recognize the United States as a sovereign nation
 - d. All of the above.

4. Andrew Jackson was elected major general of the Tennessee militia even though he had no formal military training.
 - a. True
 - b. False

5. After Tennessee was admitted to the Union, Andrew Jackson _____.
 - a. relocated to Florida
 - b. served as its congressman
 - c. ran for President of the United States
 - d. took a trip to England



QUIZ - ANSWER KEY

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Battle of New Orleans



On December 24, 1814, Great Britain and the United States signed a treaty in Ghent, Belgium that effectively ended the War of 1812. News was slow to cross the pond, however, and on January 8, 1815, the two sides met in what is remembered as one of the conflict's biggest and most decisive engagements. In the bloody Battle of New Orleans, future President Andrew Jackson and a motley assortment of militia fighters, frontiersmen, slaves, Indians and even pirates weathered a frontal assault by a superior British force, inflicting devastating casualties along the way. The victory vaulted Jackson to national stardom, and helped foil plans for a British invasion of the American frontier.

In December 1814, as diplomats met in Europe to hammer out a truce in the War of 1812, British forces mobilized for what they hoped would be the campaign's finishing blow. After defeating Napoleon in Europe earlier that year, Great Britain had redoubled its efforts against its former colonies and launched a

three-pronged invasion of the United States. American forces had managed to check two of the incursions at the Battles of Baltimore and Plattsburgh, but now the British planned to invade New Orleans—a vital seaport considered the gateway to the United States’ newly purchased territory in the West. If it could seize the Crescent City, the British Empire would gain dominion over the Mississippi River and hold the trade of the entire American South under its thumb.

Standing in the way of the British advance was Major General Andrew Jackson, who had rushed to New Orleans’ defense when he learned an attack was in the works. Nicknamed “Old Hickory” for his legendary toughness, Jackson had spent the last year subduing hostile Creek Indians in Alabama and harassing the redcoats’ operations along the Gulf Coast. The General had no love for the British—he’d spent time as their prisoner during the Revolutionary War—and he was itching for a chance to confront them in battle. “I owe to Britain a debt of retaliatory vengeance,” he once told his wife, “should our forces meet I trust I shall pay the debt.”

After British forces were sighted near Lake Borgne, Jackson declared martial law in New Orleans and ordered that every available weapon and able-bodied man be brought to bear in the city’s defense. His force soon grew into a 4,500-strong patchwork of army regulars, frontier militiamen, free blacks, New Orleans aristocrats and Choctaw tribesmen. After some hesitation, Old Hickory even accepted the help of Jean Lafitte, a dashing pirate who ran a smuggling and privateering empire out of nearby Barataria Bay. Jackson’s ramshackle army was to face off against some 8,000 British regulars, many of whom had served in the Napoleonic Wars. At the helm was Lieutenant General Sir Edward Pakenham, a respected veteran of the Peninsular War and the brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington.

The two sides first came to blows on December 23, when Jackson launched a daring nighttime attack on British forces bivouacked nine miles south of New Orleans. Jackson then fell back to Rodriguez Canal, a ten-foot-wide millrace located near Chalmette Plantation off the Mississippi River. Using local slave labor, he widened the canal into a defensive trench and used the excess dirt to build a seven-foot-tall earthen rampart buttressed with timber. When complete, this “Line Jackson” stretched nearly a mile from the east bank of the Mississippi to a nearly impassable marsh. “Here we shall plant our stakes,” Jackson told his men, “and not abandon them until we drive these red-coat rascals into the river, or the swamp.”

Despite their imposing fortifications, Lieutenant General Pakenham believed the “dirty shirts,” as the British called the Americans, would wilt before the might of a British army in formation. Following a skirmish on December 28 and a massive artillery duel on New Year’s Day, he devised a strategy for a two-part frontal assault. A small force was charged with crossing to the west bank of the Mississippi and seizing an American battery. Once in possession of the guns, they were to turn them on the Americans and catch Jackson in a punishing crossfire. At the same time, a larger contingent of some 5,000 men would charge forward in two columns and crush the main American line at the Rodriguez Canal.

Pakenham put his plan to action at daybreak on January 8. At the sound of a Congreve rocket whistling overhead, the red-coated throngs let out a cheer and began an advance toward the American line. British batteries opened up en masse, and were immediately met with an angry barrage from Jackson’s 24 artillery pieces, some of them manned by Jean Lafitte’s pirates. While Pakenham’s main force moved on the canal near the swamp, British light troops led by Colonel Robert Rennie advanced along the riverbank and overwhelmed an isolated redoubt, scattering its American defenders. Rennie had just enough time to howl, “Hurrah, boys, the day is ours!” before he was shot dead by a salvo of rifle fire from Line Jackson. With their commander lost, his men made a frantic retreat, only to be cut down in a hail of musket balls and grapeshot.

The situation on the other side of the line proved even more calamitous. Pakenham had counted on moving under the cover of morning mist, but the fog had risen with the sun, giving American rifle and artillerymen clear sightlines. Cannon fire soon began slashing gaping holes in the British line, sending men and equipment flying. As the British troops continued the advance, their ranks were riddled with musket shot. General Jackson watched the destruction from a perch near the right side of the line, bellowing, “Give it to

them, my boys! Let us finish the business today!” Old Hickory’s militiamen, having honed their aim hunting in the woods of the frontier, fired with sickening precision. Red-coated soldiers fell in waves with each American volley, many with multiple wounds. One stunned British officer later described the American rampart as resembling “a row of fiery furnaces.”

Pakenham’s plan was quickly unraveling. His men had bravely stood their ground amid the chaos of the American deluge, but a unit carrying ladders and wood fascines needed to scale Line Jackson was lagging behind. Pakenham took it upon himself to lead the outfit to the front, but in the meantime, his main formation was cut to ribbons by rifle and cannon fire. When some of the redcoats began to flee, one of Pakenham’s subordinates unwisely tried to wheel the 93rd Highlanders Regiment to their aid. American troops quickly took aim and unleashed a maelstrom of fire that felled more than half the unit, including its leader. Around that same time, Pakenham and his entourage were laced by a blast of grapeshot. The British commander perished minutes later.

With the majority of their officers out of commission, the British attack descended into bedlam. A few valiant troops tried to climb the parapets by hand, only to withdraw when they found they had no support. Pakenham’s secondary assault on Jackson’s battery across the river had met with more success, but it was too little too late. By the time the British seized the American artillery position, they could see the day was already lost. At Line Jackson, the British were retreating in droves, leaving behind a carpet of crumpled bodies. American Major Howell Tatum later said the enemy casualties were “truly distressing...some had their heads shot off, some their legs, some their arms. Some were laughing, some crying...there was every variety of sight and sound.”

The assault on Jackson’s fortifications was a fiasco, costing the British some 2,000 casualties including three generals and seven colonels—all of it in the span of only 30 minutes. Amazingly, Jackson’s ragtag outfit had lost less than 100 men. Future President James Monroe would later praise the General by saying, “History records no example of so glorious a victory obtained with so little bloodshed on the part of the victorious.” The stunned British army lingered in Louisiana for the next several days, but its remaining officers knew that any chance of taking the Crescent City had slipped through their fingers. After an abortive naval attack on nearby Fort St. Philip, the British boarded their ships and sailed back into the Gulf of Mexico.

Shortly before the British withdrawal, Andrew Jackson reentered New Orleans to the sounds of “Yankee Doodle” and a public celebration worthy of Mardi Gras. Newspapers in the beleaguered city of Washington, D.C. labeled him the national savior. The festivities only continued the following month, as news of the Treaty of Ghent reached American shores. When Congress ratified the agreement on February 16, 1815, the War of 1812 came to an official end. The conflict is now considered to have concluded in a stalemate, but at the time, the victory at New Orleans had elevated national pride to such a level that many Americans chalked it up as a win. Jackson, who would later ride his newfound celebrity all the way to the White House, was no doubt among them. Addressing his troops shortly after the battle, he hailed their “undaunted courage” in saving the country from invasion and said, “Natives of different states, acting together, for the first time in this camp...have reaped the fruits of an honorable union.”