

WHAT SO ★ PROUDLY ★ WE HAIL

The American Soul in Story, Speech, and Song

The Marines' Hymn

“The Marines’ Hymn” is the oldest official song in the US military. No one knows who wrote the song; the music itself can be found in “Gendarmes’ Duet” from the 1859 French opera Genevieve de Brabant by Jacques Offenbach, though it may trace its roots even further back to a Spanish folk song. Lyrics date from the 19th century, but no pre-20th century text exists.

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What story does this song tell about the Marines? What is distinctive about them and their mission as compared to their comrades in the Army and the Navy? Why do you think the Marines chose this song as their anthem? How does it compare to the anthems of the other military branches?

Listen to a musical rendition here: www.youtube.com/watch?v=Jh5OIT-cslQ.

From the Halls of Montezuma
To the shores of Tripoli¹
We fight our country’s battles
In the air, on land, and sea;
First to fight for right and freedom
And to keep our honor clean;
We are proud to claim the title
Of United States Marine.

Our flag’s unfurled to every breeze
From dawn to setting sun;
We have fought in every clime and place
Where we could take a gun.
In the snow of far-off Northern lands
And in sunny tropic scenes;
You will find us always on the job—

¹ “The Halls of Montezuma” refers to the 1847 Battle of Chapultepec during the Mexican–American War. “To the shores of Tripoli” refers to the First Barbary War (1801–04).

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The United States Marines.

Here's health to you and to our Corps
Which we are proud to serve;
In many a strife we've fought for life
And never lost our nerve.
If the Army and the Navy
Ever look on Heaven's scenes,
They will find the streets are guarded
By United States Marines.

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