

= Bart the General =

" Bart the General " is the fifth episode of The Simpsons ' first season . It originally aired on the Fox network in the United States on February 4 , 1990 . The episode deals with Bart 's troubles with the bully , Nelson Muntz . Bart chooses to go to war with Nelson uniting the neighborhood children against him . The episode was written by John Swartzwelder and directed by David Silverman .

= = Plot = =

Bart gets into a fight with Nelson Muntz , the school bully , while defending Lisa and the cupcakes that she baked for Miss Hoover 's birthday party . Nelson beats up Bart after school and warns him to expect the same treatment the following day . At home , Marge consoles and encourages Bart to reason with Nelson . Homer urges Bart to bend the rules and fight dirty . Taking Homer 's advice , Bart does so , but is beaten up again . Bart turns to the toughest member of the Simpson family , Grampa Simpson , who introduces Bart to Herman , the crazed one @-@ armed proprietor of an army surplus store . He instructs Bart on military tactics , then Bart declares war on Nelson and his sidekicks .

Bart enlists Nelson 's other victims in his army and trains them for combat . Herman commands from Bart 's treehouse as Bart leads his forces into battle . Ambushing Nelson and his sidekicks , they commence saturation bombing with water balloons . Nelson 's thugs surrender , and Nelson is taken prisoner . He threatens to beat up Bart as soon as he is untied . Herman drafts the armistice treaty , which states that Nelson will retain his position and name , but will not hold any actual power . Then , Bart and Nelson sign the treaty . Then , Marge enters with cupcakes , and peace prevails .

= = Production = =

This episode was running too long to use the normal opening sequence . It therefore did not feature a chalkboard gag or a couch gag . Instead , it just cut to an image of the Simpson house . David Silverman was the director and was somewhat stressed , because he was doing storyboards for this episode while also directing " Bart the Genius " . Originally , he had planned to use the song " War " by Edwin Starr in the episode . The plans were dropped , when they decided that the song did not really fit the story . The episode had problems with the censors , who did not want the characters to say " family jewels " on prime time television . The producers ignored the notes and " family jewels " remained in the episode . This act of attempted censorship was reflected in the part where Grampa Simpson writes a letter complaining of how sexualized television has become and gives a list of words he never wants to hear on TV again , one of which is " family jewels " .

Two new characters were introduced in this episode . The first , Nelson Muntz , remains a frequently used recurring character , while the second , Herman , has been used far less . The design of Herman , with the exception of his missing arm , was inspired by writer John Swartzwelder . His voice , as performed by Harry Shearer , was partly inspired by George H. W. Bush . The original idea for Herman was for him to have a differing story for the loss of his arm with every appearance .

= = Cultural references = =

The episode featured several references to war films . Several lines of dialogue , Bart slapping one of his soldiers for " being a disgrace " , and the music was lifted directly from the film Patton from 1970 composed by Jerry Goldsmith . Fox owned the rights to this film , so it was no problem to use the soundtrack . The marching sequence is a nod to Stanley Kubrick 's Full Metal Jacket from 1987 . The Longest Day from 1962 is also referenced . The silhouettes of the children climbing the jungle gym against the setting sun are a reference to Stanley Kubrick 's 1987 film Full Metal Jacket . The episode parodies the famous sailor kissing a girl in Times Square photograph taken on V @-@ J Day , where a random boy in a sailor suit kisses Lisa , before she slaps him in the face . Bart

concludes the episode by stating that the only " good wars " are the American Revolution , World War II , and the Star Wars trilogy .

= = Reception = =

In its original American broadcast , " Bart the General " finished 31st place in the weekly ratings for the week of January 29 - February 4 , 1990 with a Nielsen rating of 14 @. @ 3 . It was the highest rated show on the Fox Network that week . Since airing , the episode has received mostly positive reviews from television critics . The authors of the book I Can 't Believe It 's a Bigger and Better Updated Unofficial Simpsons Guide , Warren Martyn and Adrian Wood , said : " Some good lines and setpieces aside - we love Bart 's fantasy of death at Nelson 's hands - this episode nevertheless feels a bit unsure of itself , particularly towards the end . " In a DVD review of the first season David B. Grelck gave the episode a rating of 3 / 5 and adds " Another episode that helped to propel Bart 's popularity into the stratosphere ... " . Colin Jacobson at DVD Movie Guide said in a review that the episode " remains a primitive example of The Simpsons , but it ? s a reasonably amusing and entertaining experience . " and added that the episode " lacks the subtlety and cleverness found on later episodes , but it was onto something . " Matt Groening notes on the commentary track that he finds it strange how controversial this episode seemed at the time of its release . Today , they would go a lot further and to him this episode now seems harmless . The episode 's reference to Full Metal Jacket was named the eleventh greatest film reference in the history of the show by Nathan Ditum of Total Film .

= = = Use in scientific research = = =

" Bart the General " and Seinfeld 's " The Tape " were used in a Dartmouth College experiment to study brain activity in relation to humorous moments in television shows . The results were published in a 2004 issue of the academic journal NeuroImage . The researchers noted , " During moments of humor detection , significant [brain] activation was noted in the left posterior middle temporal gyrus ... and left inferior frontal gyrus " .

= = Home release = =

The episode was released first on home video in the United Kingdom , as part of a VHS release titled The Simpsons Collection ; the episode was paired with season one episode " There 's No Disgrace Like Home " . It was released in the US on the VHS release The Best of The Simpsons , Vol . 2 (1997) , paired with " Moaning Lisa " . It was later re @-@ released in the US in a collector 's edition boxed set of the first three volumes of The Best of The Simpsons collections . It was re @-@ released in the UK as part of VHS boxed set of the complete first season , released in November 1999 . The episode 's debut on the DVD format was as a part of The Simpsons season one DVD set , which was released on September 25 , 2001 . Groening , Brooks , and Silverman participated in the DVD 's audio commentary . A digital edition of the series ' first season was published December 20 , 2010 in the United States containing the episode , through Amazon Video and iTunes .