

# Are We Winning the Global War on Terror?

## Objectives:

**Students will:** Read and evaluate a policy memo on the “Global War on Terror” from Donald Rumsfeld.

Consider whether and how the United States can determine the success or failure of the struggle against terrorism.

Work cooperatively in groups.

## Required Reading:

You may find it useful for students to have completed the Choices curriculum unit *Responding to Terrorism: Challenges for Democracy* before beginning this lesson, but it is not necessary.

## Handouts:

[Rumsfeld Memo: Global War on Terrorism, October 16, 2003](#)

[Questions for Students](#)

## In the Classroom:

**1. Focus Question**—Put the following question on the board or overhead: “How do you know if you’ve won a war?” List student responses.

**2. Primary Source Analysis**—Split students into pairs and distribute “Rumsfeld Memo” and “Questions for Students.” Have students read the memo in their pairs and answer the questions that follow.

**3. Small Group Analysis**—After pairs have completed the questions, ask sets of pairs to work together, so that you now have groups of four. Pairs should share their answers with

each other, clarifying if necessary. Have each pair defend their answers to #3. They should be able to explain *how* each item would show whether or not the United States is winning the war on terror.

**4. Large Group Discussion**—Return to the large group setting. Ask groups to report on their answers to the questions. How does Rumsfeld define the war on terror? What kinds of information was important to Rumsfeld, as reflected in this memo? Did students think he was asking the right questions? How might students locate the answers to his questions, or others they felt were important? Do students think Secretary Rumsfeld would write the same or a different memo today?

**5. Internet Research**—If you have time, have students try to locate the information they identified in question #3. What sources could they use? How will they know if the sources are reliable? What should they do if different sources offer conflicting information? How would that situation affect their understanding of the success or failure of our response to terrorism? Discussing these questions is still valuable even if students cannot do the research.

## Extra Challenge:

Ask students to write a memo of their own. To whom would they write the memo? People at the Department of Defense? a different government department? Congress? or elsewhere? What questions would they ask in their memo? How would they describe the struggle against terrorism?