

## ***Guidelines for Examining Assumptions (or, “reading underneath the text”)***

Even if a particular belief or position is (presumably) shared by writer *and* reader, it is no less an assumption. So..

- What “assumptions,” what *unexamined beliefs* does the writer’s argument presuppose?
- Are these assumptions explicit or implicit?
- Are these assumptions important to the author’s argument or only incidental?
- Does the author give any evidence of being aware of the (hidden) assumptions in her or his argument?
- If a given assumption or set of them seems intentionally implicit within the work, why do you think the writer would make this kind of choice—why hide the assumption rather than stating it outright?
- What do these assumptions tell us about the writer’s political agenda or cultural-literary position in relation to the piece of writing?
- Would a critic be likely to share these assumptions, or are they exactly what a critic would challenge?
- What sort of evidence would be relevant to supporting or rejecting these assumptions?
- Am I willing to grant the author’s assumptions? If not, why not?