



PROGRAM SUPPORT NOTES

Critical Thinking Assumptions

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For Teachers

Introduction

This informative program is part of the Critical Thinking series. It teaches us about assumptions, an important part of arguments. As critical thinkers, it is important for us to analyse and evaluate assumptions to determine if they are valid. In this program, experts Dr. Steve Taylor and Dr. Roy Van den Brink Budgen guide us through the process of identifying what an assumption is, and teach us some techniques for analysing assumptions. A key aspect of this program is a very interesting case study which is then deconstructed by Dr. Roy Van den Brink Budgen.

Timeline

00:00:00	00:10:02	Key Ideas
00:00:00	00:06:15	Case Study – Girls and Binge Drinking – Find and evaluate the assumptions
00:00:00	00:09:59	Case Study –Analysis
00:00:00	00:00:00	Activities

Recommended Resources

<http://www.criticalthinking.org/>

<http://www.scootle.edu.au/ec/p/home>

<http://www.acara.edu.au/default.asp>

<http://arts.monash.edu.au/philosophy/peer-instruction/database/criticalthinking/assumptions.php>

<http://assess-systems.com.au/ability/watson.php>

Student Worksheet

Initiate Prior Learning

1. With your class brainstorm: what is an assumption?

2. Define the following concepts:

a) Assumption

b) Evidence

c) Inference

3. Personal Reflection: Why is it important to be a critical thinker?

Active Viewing Guide

1. Fill in the missing word:

“For an argument to make sense there is often more than what is explicitly stated. We call this something more an _____.”

2. What is an assumption?

3. Are assumptions an important part of an argument?

4. What is ‘the negative test’?

5. Is it common to have arguments without assumptions?

6. Fill in the missing words:

a) When making assumptions, you need to consider alternative _____.

b) In the case study, Claire claims that if teenagers drink alcohol, ‘when they get older they’ll drink more’. The assumption she is making is that the present causes the _____.

Critical Thinking Assumptions

c) In the case study, Claire makes a link between binge drinking and high rates of teenage pregnancy. She is looking for a _____ relationship.

7. Finding assumptions is called what?

8. Accepting the assumption is called what?

Critical Thinking Assumptions

Extension Activities

1. Watch the news on television tonight and complete the following table.

- a) Count how many facts are stated and how many assumptions are made. You can use the tally box below to record your results.

Title of News Program:	Assumption	Fact

- b) What do your findings indicate about the use of assumptions when presenting information?

2. Select a magazine feature article to search for assumptions. Make a list of the assumptions the article contains. For each assumption you list, explain why it is an assumption and not a fact.

Title of Magazine Article	Assumption	Why is this an assumption not a fact?

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3. Read the following statements. Put an (A) next to the ones which are assumptions and an (F) next to the statements which are facts.

- a) On average, women live longer than men. _____
- b) Women live longer than men so they must live healthier lives. _____
- c) Diet soft drinks contain fewer calories than soft drinks which contain sugar. _____
- d) Diet soft drinks contain fewer calories than soft drinks which contain sugar, so diet soft drinks are healthier for you. _____
- e) If you smoke you will get cancer. _____
- f) Smoking causes cancer. _____

4. Write down four statements which are assumptions.

5. Analyse: What is the difference between a fact and an assumption? Write a one page response.

Suggested Student Responses

Initiate Prior Learning

1. With your class brainstorm: what is an assumption?
Answers will vary
2. Define the following concepts:
 - a) Assumption
Supposing a thing without proof
 - b) Evidence
Any mode of proof
 - c) Inference
Reasoning based on factual knowledge or evidence
3. Personal Reflection: Why is it important to be a critical thinker?
Answers will vary

Active Viewing Guide

1. Fill in the missing word:

“For an argument to make sense there is often more than what is explicitly stated. We call this something more an **assumption**.”

2. What is an assumption?

A reason that is not stated

3. Are assumptions an important part of an argument?

Yes

4. What is ‘the negative test’?

The negative test is if you put the opposite of the assumption into the statement. If it doesn’t make sense, then you haven’t found an assumption.

5. Is it common to have arguments without assumptions?

No. Most arguments have assumptions.

6. Fill in the missing words:

a) When making assumptions, you need to consider alternative **explanations**.

b) In the case study, Claire claims that if teenagers drink alcohol, ‘when they get older they’ll drink more’. The assumption she is making is that the present causes the **Future**.

c) In the case study, Claire makes a link between binge drinking and high rates of teenage pregnancy. She is looking for a **causal** relationship.

7. Finding assumptions is called what?

Analysis

8. Accepting the assumption is called what?

Evaluation

Extension Activities

1. Watch the news on television tonight and complete the following table.
 - a) Count how many facts are stated and how many assumptions are made. You can use the tally box below to record your results.
Answers will vary
 - b) What do your findings indicate about the use of assumptions when presenting information?
Answers will vary
2. Select a magazine feature article to search for assumptions. Make a list of the assumptions the article contains. For each assumption you list, explain why it is an assumption and not a fact.
Answers will vary
3. Read the following statements. Put an (A) next to the ones which are assumptions and an (F) next to the statements which are facts.
 - a) On average, women live longer than men. **F**
 - b) Women live longer than men so they must live healthier lives. **A**
 - c) Diet soft drinks contain fewer calories than soft drinks which contain sugar. **F**
 - d) Diet soft drinks contain fewer calories than soft drinks which contain sugar, so diet soft drinks are healthier for you. **A**
 - e) If you smoke you will get cancer. **A**
 - f) Smoking causes cancer. **F**
4. Write down four statements which are assumptions.
Statements will vary
5. Analyse: What is the difference between a fact and an assumption? Write a one page response.
Responses will vary
Check out the web <http://www.criticalthinking.org/page.cfm?PageID=484&CategoryID=68> for an article titled, 'Critical Thinking: Distinguishing Between Inferences and Assumptions'.