

A sign is a visible
stand in
for invisible ideas.

For example:

In our contemporary culture,
a baseball cap worn with its bill backwards
(which we *can see*)

stands for

many invisible ideas
(which we *can't see*)
such as

"rebelliousness,"
"resistance to conformity,"
"edginess,"
"toughness,"
"a laid back, devil-may-care attitude,"
etc.

As an analyst of cultural signs,
you zero-in on a specific sign that is visible,
then make persuasive claims about the invisible
ideas that underlie that sign.