**This I Believe**

In the 1950s, journalist Edward R. Murrow hosted a weekly radio series inviting listeners “to write about the core beliefs that guide” their daily lives. In 2005, *This I Believe* was revived for NPR as a way “to encourage people to…develop respect for beliefs different from their own.”

*This I Believe* offers a simple, if difficult invitation: Write a few hundred words expressing the core principles that guide your life—your personal credo.

Beliefs are choices. No one has authority over your personal beliefs. Your beliefs are in jeopardy only when you don’t know what they are.

Understanding your own beliefs and those of others, comes through focused thought and discussion. Take a moment, then, to consider the beliefs that guide the lives of others, beliefs that may confirm your own, or challenge them, or even open your mind to something new. When you are done, think about this: What would you say? ~excerpts from the book’s introduction, by Jay Allison

Before you write your own *This I Believe* essay, I would like you to spend some time familiarizing yourself with the concept of the NPR *This I Believe* program. You can do this by visiting the website https://thisibelieve.org. By looking under the “Explore” tab, you can read essays by people your age; by people from your state; or by people who have similar values/interests.

Your task is to read or listen to three essays (minimum) and respond to the questions below. Respond to each question in complete sentences for each of the three essays you choose.

1. Identify the author and the title of the essay.
2. What belief is the author sharing?
3. What can *you* learn from the essay, *eg*: What is the central idea/theme? Explain your decision.
   *You have a list of tone and mood words in your daybook.*

Please, do not indicate your agreement or disagreement with the essay, simply analyze what you have read or heard.

**Due Thursday, 10/4**

Other due dates:

- ✓ **10/9**: Have a rough draft ready for peer review. You can either bring a printed copy to class, or work on Google Docs.
- ✓ **10/18**: Final copy of the essay is due on turnitin.com at 11:59 PM.

**Turnitin Information:**

If you already have an account and can remember your information, just log in and join our class with the Class ID and the enrollment key. Otherwise, you will need to create a new account, using the same class ID and enrollment key.

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Write your own This I Believe essay

Rough Draft: Tuesday, 10/9 (at the beginning of class) bring a copy for peer review

I am asking you to compose a 350-500 word personal essay describing an idea or principle you believe in. You are to have a firm position that is supported by a story that demonstrates how you came to hold this belief or why you have found this belief to be important to your life. For this exercise to be meaningful, you must make it completely your own. This short statement isn’t all you believe; it’s simply a way to introduce others to something you value. In spite of the name, your belief need not be religious or even public. You may decide to focus on commitments to family, service, political action, or the arts. As you look for a focus, try to choose concrete and specific language. Provide details that help others understand your past, present, and future choices. Please understand that you will choose the people who read this essay. I will not ask you to present it to (or share it with) the class.

Before you begin writing, you need to define your belief. One way to do this is to list everything that you believe and then choose one that has a story that will show others why that belief is important to you.

You could also ask yourself these questions:

✓ Did you ever change your mind about something that you were certain about? Why?
✓ Can you think of someone who has taught you a valuable lesson about life? Can you remember the exact moment when that lesson occurred?
✓ Did you ever have to confront someone very different from you? If so, what happened? What did you learn?
✓ What was your “do something” moment— the time you realized you wanted to be more active in changing the world?
✓ What has been the most challenging or rewarding moment in your life? What did you learn?

Questions to consider in the planning of your draft:

✓ Who is my audience?
✓ What is the purpose of my essay?
✓ What is my belief? Why is it important?
✓ Does the story I provide connect to and support the belief I embrace.
✓ How should I write my introduction to engage readers’ attention?
✓ What specific and interesting details will enhance my story?

When you are writing your essay, write in the best way you know how and follow these general guidelines:

Tell a story: Be specific. Take your belief out of your mind and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when your belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, work, and family, and tell of the things you know that no one else does. Your story need not be heart-wrenching or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be real. Make sure your story explains your belief and the shaping of your beliefs.

Be brief: Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words. The shorter length forces you to focus on the belief that is central to your life.

Name your belief: If you can’t name it in a sentence or two, your essay might not be about belief. Also, rather than writing a list of beliefs, focus on one core belief so that you can make others understand why you believe the way you do.

Be positive: Please avoid preaching or editorializing. You are not trying to persuade anyone to believe what you believe. Share what you do believe, not what you don’t believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial “we.” Avoid using the preachy “you.” This is your story, your belief; speak in the first person.

Be personal: Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you. I’m not saying to use slang, just use your own voice. Try reading your essay aloud to yourself several times, and each time edit it and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

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