

“This I Believe” Essay

We have been reading and annotating essays from a radio project called “This I Believe.” These essays share the personal beliefs or principals of the authors. Through these essays, the writers have a chance to explore who they are as people, how they view the world around them, and what might be a way to make themselves “better.” As literature is a way to understand the world, I would like to better understand you before we get into the reading of stories, novels, and nonfiction. To do this, you will be writing your own “This I Believe” essay in which you will tell me more about who you are and how you see the world around you, specifically how you think you and other people can be better.

Purpose: Write a narrative which illustrates a personal belief that shapes your life. Your audience should read your essay and be able to understand who you are more as a result of this story and belief. What has this experience taught you? How has your view of the world or yourself changed as a result? For example, you could talk about how coming to high school has changed who you are—how your friends are different, your school is bigger and you don’t see yourself the same way as when you were in junior high school. Or you could tell a story of something that happened to you that changed how you see the world—broke your leg and couldn’t play soccer any longer, joined the school band or a team and became a part of the “warrior” family.

Style: This is a short essay, so you will need to be concise and **choose only the most important details** necessary to describe your belief. You’ll want to have a good “lead” – a sentence that brings your reader into your paper (remember the repetition of the essays we read). You can use humor, or you can take a more serious approach. Think about what style would best reflect your personality. Remember that you are telling a story so don’t just lecture to your audience.

Process: To begin, think on paper about your day-to-day life: free-write, list, cluster, discuss, and read other *This I Believe* essays to generate ideas and answer these questions:

- What influences my decisions, my outlook, and my interactions with those around me?
- What principles guide my life?
- What significant event or person shaped a strong belief in me?

After you have established one belief to focus on, you will then need to choose a specific, personal story that illustrates this belief and how you live by it. Be specific. This is an essay that can only be written by you. Here are sample belief/thesis statements:

- I believe in sleeping in on Sundays.
- I believe pets can create a “home.”
- I believe part of GCHS has given me a sense of pride.
- I believe being fourteen is the hardest age.

Product: This essay must be a minimum of 1-1/2 pages long. It should be formatted as follows: Times New Roman, double-spaced, one-inch margins all-around. Please include an original title centered at the top of the essay. These don’t count as original titles: *This I Believe* or *I Believe in*

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