**“This I Believe” Overview**

We all have personal beliefs; whether we recognize them or can even articulate them. These beliefs are born out of our experiences and they can have a profound influence on our lives. In the 1950s, National Public Radio (NPR) began the “This I Believe” project, which invited listeners to write down and speak their personal beliefs on air. Your first assignment for English 12 is to articulate ONE of your personal beliefs in a short narrative that includes your belief, whatever it is. Be personal, be real and really think about what YOU believe.

“This I Believe” Personal Essay Assignment Details and Deadlines:

• *350-500 words (about 3 min reading out loud)*

*• 1st rough draft due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*• 2nd rough draft (typed and printed for in-class peer edits) due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*• Final draft (typed, formatted, and 2 copies printed)– due: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

*• Present your “This I Believe” statement out loud in class on: \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_*

**“This I Believe Essay” Writing Guidelines (from thisibelieve.org)**

I invite you to contribute to this project by writing and submitting your own statement of personal belief. You must be 18 years of age to submit to thisibelieve.org.

I understand how challenging this is—it requires such intimacy that no one else can do it for you. To guide you through this process, I offer these suggestions:

**Tell a story**: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events of your life. Consider moments when 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-warming or gut-wrenching—it can even be funny—but it should be real. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and the shaping of your beliefs.

**Be brief**: Your statement should be between 350 and 500 words. That’s about three minutes when read aloud at your natural pace.

**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, consider focusing on one core belief, because three minutes is a very short time.

**Be positive**: Please avoid preaching or editorializing. Tell us what you do believe, not what you don’t believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial “we.” Make your essay about you; speak in the first person.

**Be personal**: Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read 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.

For this project, you are also guided by the original “This I Believe” series and the producers’ invitation to those who wrote essays in the 1950s. Their advice holds up well and we are abiding by it. Please consider it carefully in writing your piece. In introducing the original series, host Edward R. Murrow said, “Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent.” I would argue that the need is as great now as it was 50 years ago. I am eager for your contribution.



