

TAKE ACTION: “This I Believe” Overview

We all have personal beliefs (beliefs we stand for, beliefs we are willing to fight for, beliefs that make us who we are). These beliefs are so strong within us, that when we look at society and witness injustices and compare them to our beliefs, we feel we must take action to improve our world. Our 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 final assignment for your Spring 2015 TAKE ACTION expedition is to articulate ONE (or two, but no more than three) of your personal beliefs in a short narrative that includes how your culture has affected your belief whatever it is. Be personal, be real, and really think about what YOU stand for.

“This I Believe” Personal Essay

Assignment Details and Deadlines:

- 400-600 words (about a 4-5 min reading aloud)
- 1st rough draft due: _____
- 2nd rough draft due (typed and printed for in-class peer edits) due: _____
- Final Draft (typed, formatted, and 2 copies printed) due: _____
- Taping and presentation of your “This I Believe Statement” due: _____

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

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 400 and 600 words. That’s about 4-5 minutes when read aloud at your normal 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 (or two, or three) core belief, because 4-5 minutes is rather a 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 first person*.

Be personal: Write in words and phrases that are comfortable for you to speak. We recommend you read your essay aloud to your self several times, and each time edit and simplify it until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echo your belief and the way you speak.

*****We are guided by the original “This I Believe” series. 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.” We would argue that the need is as great now as it was 70 years ago. We are eager for your contribution.**

Oral Presentation Rubric: "THIS I BELIEVE" Essay Presentation

Student Name _____

CATEGORY	4	3	2	1
Writing: Write informative or explanatory text to examine and convey complex ideas, concepts, and information clearly and accurately through the effective selection, organization, and analysis of content.	Student clearly defines and convincingly explains a specific belief using particular and engaging examples organized logically into multiple paragraphs to support an original thesis. The essay effectively ties this belief BOTH to personal experiences AND to classroom learning this semester.	Student defines and explains a belief using examples logically organized into several paragraphs to support a clear thesis. They essay effectively ties the belief to personal experiences OR to classroom learning this semester.	Student's definition of a belief is overly general or unclear. There is little explanation in support of the belief and/or organization of paragraphs is muddles. There are few personal examples and there is no clear tie to classroom learning this semester.	Student does not articulate a specific belief, explain ideas, offer relevant personal examples, connect to classroom learning this semester, or organize paragraphs clearly.
Point of View	Consistent use of first-person point of view.	Mostly consistent use of first-person point of view.	Inconsistent use of first-person point of view.	Uses second person (you) point of view or the collective (we).
Enthusiasm/Posture and Eye Contact	Enthusiasm: Facial expressions and body language generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic in others. Posture and Eye Contact: Stands or sits up straight, looks relaxed and confident. Establishes eye contact with the camera during the presentation.	Facial Expressions and body language sometimes generate a strong interest and enthusiasm about the topic in others. Stands or sits up straight and establishes eye contact with the camera during the presentation.	Facial expressions and body language are used to try to generate enthusiasm, but seem somewhat faked. Sometimes stands or sits up straight and establishes eye contact.	Very little use of facial expressions or body language. Did not generate much interest in topic being presented. Slouches and/or does not look at people during the presentation.
Props/Setting	Props: Student uses several props that show considerable work/creativity and which enhance the presentation. Setting: Student chooses appropriate backdrop in which to film their statement.	Props: Student uses one prop that shows considerable work/creativity and which makes the presentation better. Setting: Student chooses an ok backdrop in which to tape their statement.	Props: Student uses 1 prop which makes the presentation better. Setting: Student chooses basic backdrop.	Props: The student uses no props OR the props chosen detract from the presentation. Setting: Little creative thought was put into the backdrop of the recording.
Stays on Topic	Stays on topic all (100%) of the time.	Stays on topic most (99-90%) of the time.	Stays on topic some (89%-75%) of the time.	It is hard to tell what the topic was.
Integration of Technology	Thoroughly uses two or more different tech tools to help convey the essence of the statement (i.e. ipad, GoPro, cell phone, audio)	Thoroughly uses one tech tool to help convey the essence of essay.	Partially uses one tech tool to help convey the essence of essay.	Uses not tech tools.