

**Assignment:**

What do you believe in? Think about what makes you who you are. Your task is to write a personal essay focused on what you believe. It must be 500-750 words, typed, and double-spaced if possible. This should resemble the "This I Believe" essay format. You are to write this in first person and use examples from your experience to support your belief statement. Essentially, you are writing a story that shows what you believe in. For example, complete the following statement: I believe... Then write your story. Instead of using that statement in your essay, make it your title, taking off the "I believe." Allow your readers to infer your belief.

**The essay is worth 72 points.**

- Content/Specific Examples from Personal Experience
- Organization
- Word choice
- Voice
- Sentence fluency
- Conventions (spelling, mechanics, usage)

**The Presentation is worth 28 points.**

- Eye Contact
- Body Language
- Poise
- Enthusiasm/Elocution
- Subject Knowledge
- Organization

**This essay is due Friday, September 2, 2016. Please bring a hard copy of your essay to class. Whether you are typing it or handwriting it, please double space. You will present your belief to the class on September 2, 2016. Your 1-2 minute presentation is a creative expression of your belief. You will not be reading the essay out loud. You are expected to either memorize your speech or use brief notes. Bring in something to use as a prop to guide your brief conversational "speech." This could be a PowerPoint, a picture or object to pass around the room. Be creative. Good luck!**

**Tips To Add Audience Appeal To Personal Essays**

1. Be sure your essay is about something you (your character) care strongly enough about to elaborate and wax eloquent or passionate about it. Readers want to know what you know, feel what you feel, and understand exactly where you're coming from.
2. While the idea for the essay must be personal, make the frame big enough to allow your reader to find parallels between your experience and theirs. Give readers the opportunity to say, "Ah! Yes, I've never been there or done that, but I can relate to what the author is talking about." Even if readers have not been on a mission trip to Africa, the effective writer must draw in an audience to show a more universal implication of a very personal experience or belief.
3. If you are writing about a small personal occurrence, put your idea in a context that gives the reader insight to both the small moment and the wider perspective. Think of your essay as a camera lens. You might start by describing a fine detail (a specific moment in the narrative), then opens up the lens to take in the wide view (the general/global backdrop), then close the piece by narrowing back to the fine detail.
4. Use details to draw the reader in. Be specific and avoid using abstract expressions and phrases such as "the best day of my life" or "I'd never known greater grief" to describe emotions of love or loss. Make the emotions real and immediate by noting specifics and details that draw the reader into your experience.
5. Employ all the senses to convey your ideas to the reader: sight, sound, taste, touch, and hearing.
6. Make sure that beyond all the idea development, your readers can summarize the MAIN IDEA that you BELIEVE. You should not have to hit the readers over the head with a summary statement such as "What I am trying to say..." or "What I really mean is..." In fact, such a closing is almost insulting or an indication that you fear you have danced around the belief without making it crystal clear. You must aim to leave the readers clear and satisfied—whether they agree with what you believe or not. Sometimes a brief echo of the opening is the most satisfying clincher to bring a personal essay full circle. (This I Believe Curriculum [www.thisibelieve.org](http://www.thisibelieve.org))