

“This I Believe” Assignment: ESSAY

Think about something that you truly believe with all of your heart. This could be anything that you have learned through your experiences, growth or struggles about life, yourself, or all humanity. Write YOUR HEART OUT about something YOU BELIEVE.

Student directive: It is now time to begin the writing process. **Your finished product will be one page (double spaced, Times New Roman, 12-font).**

Here are some guidelines to remember when you begin writing your essay. These may be different than what you usually are asked to do in writing class, but this is a different kind of essay.

It’s all about you – Write about you and your thoughts. Tell us your story in the first person, and try to avoid sentences like “We feel this way.”

Keep it personal – Don’t try to use words or phrases you wouldn’t normally say. Remember, if you wouldn’t be comfortable saying the words out loud, it is probably too formal.

Timing is everything – Make sure that you read your finished essay out loud. It shouldn’t be more than three minutes long when read at a normal speaking rate.

Say what you *do* believe, not what you *don’t* – Write about what you think, but not at the expense of others. Keep the focus on you, and what you believe, not what you disagree with.

Have fun! How many times are you allowed to be 100% free with your choice of topic, and what you want to say about it? This is your chance to write about your personal philosophy of life, so don’t be shy—let it out!

The next few pages will delve into four important topics for writing: creating paragraphs, introductions, juicy details, and convincing conclusions. At this point, it is time for students to begin constructing drafts of their essays. This curriculum highly recommends following the five-step method of writing: pre-writing*, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Your classroom may utilize these steps in the way you best see fit. The following instructions have been written with traditional paragraph construction in mind.

*All of the previous work for this project can be considered pre-writing. It may be a good idea to have students bring all of their activity sheets and notes with them when they begin their drafts.

Past examples: Ideas for essay...

I believe in kindness. A kind smile can speak louder than any words.

I believe in laughter. It is the best medicine and good for the soul.

I believe in always trusting your gut. It is the best guide and the wisest advisor.

I believe in expanding your knowledge. Nobody should be a closed off book; be open to new ideas and diversity.

ESSAY EXAMPLES BELOW

I Believe in Books:

I believe in books. Books are an adventure into another world. I believe in the hero that rises to the occasion and triumphs over evil. I believe in the little guy winning through fearless determination. I believe in the power of books to escape to another place. Books are an escape to the future, or to the forest, or an enchanted island. They are entertainment but also have a therapeutic effect. I believe books can give one skills and empower them. Books are knowledge. Books believe in me and the work I put forth learning from them.

I developed a healthy appetite for reading when I was in 4th grade. I enjoyed the adventure and excitement of a good story. I didn't have many friends so a book created characters I could empathize with and cheer for. The Hardy Boys books were the first books that I came to enjoy. Books created an avenue of escape from my dull surroundings. In high school well before the movie was created I read the Hobbit. I remember enjoying the beautiful scenery that was described and rooting for the characters. The Hobbit involves a group of characters that work together towards a common goal of getting Dwarves home back. It demonstrated teamwork and on a more subtle level shows the importance of good teamwork.

The Hobbit story describes a quest and has great characterization. My favorite character was Gandalf because of his knowledge and power but many other characters fit a different role in the story so many readers can have a different favorite character. This quest can be compared to the quest of life and show to go through when there is a team around to support one in their goals. Later in life I went through a difficult relationship problem and was able to briefly escape to another place with a book.

Books also provide knowledge. Books are a fundamental piece of learning and can give a person the power to be anyone they want to. Growing up I was told I could get any job that I wanted as long as I put forth the effort to learn and develop the necessary skill in the job that I

wanted to do. Books create a sense of empowerment that enables one to be able to learn anything they want to. In high school I decided that I wanted to be a drafter. Through hard work and a few helpful books I was able to learn new subjects and drafting. These books helped get me a job in my current line of work. Books never forget, so if I need to refresh on a critical math equation or recall a chemistry formula it will be there for me. Books are a means to provide me an avenue to my goals. Books demand attention and in return impart knowledge. I believe in books. Read a few you'll enjoy them.

Hard Work Really Does Pay Off:

I believe anything can be achieved through hard work and dedication. I have found this to be factual not only through what happens around me but through myself. I stumbled upon this belief through the trial and tribulations I faced throughout my childhood.

As a child I was not raised in a rough area, nor was I poor, trouble just somehow found me in and out of school. Whether it was dilemmas at school or conflicts at home I was not headed down the correct path that I am today. I had no idea of what I wanted for myself in the future all I knew is that I wanted to be successful was not sure how? Or where to start just knew I wanted to be successful. That's when I was introduced to the late Walter Payton, a well-known iconic football star, at that point in my life he was unknown to me. Until I was introduced to a book called "Never Die Easy" a biography of Walter Payton. In this book it showed Walter not only as football player but a man, a man who would rather spend time with love ones and less fortunate instead of going to clubs and blowing money or while others sleep he would run the hill to get better. For him the grind never stopped, there's always a way to improve yourself. He was the definition of hard work and dedication both on and off the field and the results you can receive from that, such as having a prestigious football award named after you that commemorates the core values that you used towards being not only a great player but a great person. I admire him, he was never in trouble on or off the field always made the correct choices just an all-around outstanding human being.

This launched me into my sports journey. I excelled at multiple sports but football stood out above the rest, not only was it the sport Walter Payton played and excelled in, but required the most heart and dedication. I couldn't stay away from it; football kept me away from trouble because I was so dedicated to the sport and what came along with it. Day in and day out rain, snow or sunshine always working, pushing myself in the weight room. The crashing of the weights as the 20 kilogram bar went up and down with multiple 45 pound plates on each side of the squat and bench rack; or the freshly cut grass on the field in the morning just as the sun is coming up to start a new. The moment you step on that grass it is like stepping through a threshold, you're a different person in a different world it feels as if your problems go away it was my sanctuary. So, through my hard work and dedication I was able to translate that into not only a successful football career but overall athletic career and later down the road that would lead me to where I am today a student athlete at Old Dominion University. Honestly what meant the most, and still runs through my mind today was the senior banquet I was recognized not only for my talent on an off the field but for my relentless work ethic and refusal to quit under any circumstances on and off the field. Although it is only two words, hard work and dedication were absolutely essential in getting to where I am today and I could not see myself in the situation I am in without it.

I believe in the Robustness of Humanity:

When I was a teenager we moved to the country, to run a small lakeside mountain resort. For a nerdy 15 year old from the burbs, it was a rude shock. It was not the rural isolation that got to me— I loved the mountains and still do. But I was completely unprepared for the new family business, dealing every day with the unfiltered public, who came into our store for gas, groceries, and bait. I had no idea how incredibly sheltered my life had been, as a middle class kid in a college town.

I witnessed amazing episodes of bizarre behavior and breathtaking cluelessness. I ended some days literally in tears: “Mom! Where do these people **come** from?” A quick example: in 1975, the movie *_Jaws_* came out. Suddenly, customers started asking, in all seriousness, if there were sharks in the lake. We’re 200 miles from the ocean, 7,000 feet up in the mountains. The lake is half a mile wide, two miles long, and filled by melting snow. Are there any **sharks** in the lake? How could anyone possibly be so stupid? The first time, I just stood there slack jawed. After a while, I got cynical and mean: “Well, no. Not technically” or “Oh, don’t worry about **them**.” And this is just one of many tales, both hilarious and heartbreaking.

This kind of experience makes a teenage kid skeptical about human nature. I got to thinking that people, **other** people, were ignorant dolts who pretty much sleepwalked through their miserable existence. **I**, of course, was much smarter than that, but age has brought some humility. Partly, it’s that I went out and made some breathtakingly boneheaded mistakes of my own. Mainly, I’ve spent many years working with a lot of people who are, in fact, really, **really** smart, and together we seem to be as dumb as ever. It’s slowly dawned on me that most of us are confused about most things most of the time.

Human history is an endless catalog of folly and madness, with new horrors added daily. Yet, bad as it is, most of us are **not** starving, most of us do **not** die young from some terrible disease, most of us get on, if not fabulously well, at least minimally adequately. We have agriculture and medicine, music and art. We have, most of us, electricity and roads and

roofs over our heads. We have the Internet and National Public Radio. We have all this *stuff*, and mostly it works. Even our dissatisfactions are measured against our expectation that it could work even better. And here's the thing: all of this is the product of *them*, *those* people, all those stupid people who made my life so miserable as a teenager. We are them and they are us. I believe in the astonishing robustness of human civilization. It may be a teetering-on-the-brink-of-disaster, two-steps-forward-one-step-back mess, yet somehow we manage. That's amazing.

