

Credo: What I Believe

Neil Gaiman



About the Author



Neil Gaiman (b. 1960) is a British author of novels and comic books. With the success of *Black Orchid* and *Sandman* in the DC Comics universe, Gaiman revitalized the adult comic book market. He primarily writes in the dark fantasy genre, and his rich style and imagery have been very popular among both mature and young readers. In 2009, Gaiman received the Newbery Medal, which is awarded to authors making the most distinguished contribution to American literature for children.

BACKGROUND

A credo is a statement of a person's beliefs that guides his or her actions. Neil Gaiman wrote "Credo" in response to the 2015 attack on the French satirical magazine *Charlie Hebdo*. The terrorist group Al-Qaeda claimed responsibility for the attack at the magazine, which killed 12 people.

NOTES

- 1 I believe that it is difficult to kill an idea, because ideas are invisible and contagious, and they move fast.
- 2 I believe that you can set your own ideas against ideas you dislike. That you should be free to argue, explain, clarify, debate, offend, insult, rage, mock, sing, dramatize and deny.
- 3 I do not believe that burning, murdering, exploding people, smashing their heads with rocks (to let the bad ideas out), drowning them or even defeating them will work to contain ideas you do not like. Ideas spring up where you do not expect them, like weeds, and are as difficult to control.
- 4 I believe that repressing ideas spreads ideas.
- 5 I believe that people and books and newspapers are containers for ideas, but that burning the people will be as unsuccessful as

firebombing the newspaper archives. It is already too late. It is always too late. The ideas are out, hiding behind people's eyes, waiting in their thoughts. They can be whispered. They can be written on walls in the dead of night. They can be drawn.

- 6 I believe that ideas do not have to be right to exist.
- 7 I believe you have every right to be perfectly certain that images of god or prophet or man are sacred and undefilable, just as I have the right to be certain of the sacredness of speech, of the sanctity of the right to mock, comment, to argue and to utter.
- 8 I believe I have the right to think and say the wrong things. I believe your remedy for that should be to argue with me or to ignore me, and that I should have the same remedy for the wrong things that you think.
- 9 I believe that you have the absolute right to think things that I find offensive, stupid, preposterous, or dangerous, and that you have the right to speak, write, or distribute these things, and that I do not have the right to kill you, maim you, hurt you, or take away your liberty or property because I find your ideas threatening or insulting or downright disgusting. You probably think my ideas are pretty vile, too.
- 10 I believe that in the battle between guns and ideas, ideas will, eventually, win.
- 11 Because the ideas are invisible, and they linger, and, sometimes, they are even true.
- 12 *Eppur si muove*:¹ and yet it moves. ♣

1. **Eppur si muove** (ehp puh-see MWOH-vay) Italian phrase meaning "and yet it moves," attributed to the Italian mathematician, physicist, and philosopher Galileo Galilei (1564–1642) in 1633, after being forced to recant his claim that the Earth moves around the sun.