

Grade 12

Summer Reading and Writing Assignment

(Contemporary Issues in Literature and Composition, Honors College English, and Senior Experience)*

One of the goals of the Grade 12 English courses is to create an environment in which you can discover new understandings about yourself and the world around you. To start this process, your summer assignment will focus on developing your own personal philosophy. This is not a new process and it certainly is not easy. In 1951 Edward R. Murrow hosted *This I Believe*, a daily radio program that reached 39 million listeners. On this broadcast, Americans—both well known and unknown—read five-minute essays about their personal philosophy of life. They shared insights about individual values that shaped their daily actions. Fifty years later, This I Believe, Inc, is continuing the mission and we will be using their website as the platform for our own philosophies which could develop into your college essay.

1) Print the **FOUR** essays (links are provided below)

[“Finding Out What’s Under Second Base”](#)

[“A Shared Moment of Trust”](#)

[“Disrupting My Comfort Zone”](#)

[“Returning to What’s Natural”](#)

2) Go to the following website <http://thisibelieve.org>. Use the EXPLORE tab to find **ONE** additional essay that speaks to your interests or ideals

3) Write a reaction paragraph for **EACH** essay (**FIVE total**). In this paragraph, explain the author’s beliefs and give your personal reaction. Do you agree or disagree with him/her? Why or Why not? Be sure to cite specifics in your paragraph.

4) **Now it’s your turn!! Give it the “old college try!!”** Using the insights gained from reading the *This I Believe* essays, construct your own *This I Believe* essay. Follow the guidelines provided below. Read the instructions carefully. Essays should be typed and should follow the formatting rules of MLA. The essay will count as a writing assignment for the first quarter and more importantly, can be used as a launching point for your college essay.

***AP Literature has a separate assignment.**

This I Believe Essay-Writing Guidelines

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.

“Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent.” -Edward R. Murrow