

Name: _____

'This I Believe' Essay-Writing Instructions

We invite you to share your own beliefs by writing your own statement of personal belief about one of the themes we have explored in our South Africa unit. Some topics you may wish to consider include:

- * What is courage?
- * What is justice?
- * Fear as a prison/ obstacle to change and reconciliation
- * The need for violence (or not)
- * The power of teenagers in transforming society
- * _____

We understand how challenging this is -- it requires such intimacy that no one else can do it for you. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

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 about this issue in your own life.

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 a 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.

Personal Essay

Name: _____

Date: _____

Assignment: This I Believe

Class: Global Literature - Owens

Modes: Personal Essay

Ideas and Content

Score x 2 = ____/10

1 2 3 4 5

The writer:

- Clearly articulates a belief system
- Discusses what (s)he believes, not about what (s)he does not believe
- Names the belief in a sentence or two.
- Identifies the specific event(s) that, or person/people who helped the writer form this belief
- *Shows* how the belief ties to the essence of the writer's daily life philosophy (gives a specific example of how the belief has affected his/her actions in daily life)

Organization

Score = ____/5

1 2 3 4 5

The writer:

- Includes an introduction
- Uses a clear belief to guide the paper
- Tells specific events and examples in an order that flows naturally and easily makes sense to the reader/listener
- Includes a conclusion

Sentence Fluency

Score x 2 = ____/10

1 2 3 4 5

The writer:

- Uses sentences that flow and sound natural when read aloud
- Varies patterns of sentences
- Varies lengths of sentences
- Varies beginnings of sentences
- Has a control over simple and complex sentences

Conventions

Score = ____/5

1 2 3 4 5

The writer demonstrates control of standard writing conventions:

- punctuation
- spelling
- capitalization
- paragraph breaks
- grammar/usage

especially:

- avoids run-ons & comma splices
- avoids sentence fragments

Word Choice

Score x 2 = ____/10

1 2 3 4 5

The writer:

- Chooses words that work
- Uses interesting, unique vocabulary correctly
- Attempts to use colorful language
- Occasionally experiments with language, and generally avoids clichés.

Voice

Score x 2 = ____/10

1 2 3 4 5

The writer:

- Gives the reader a sense of interaction with the writer
- Demonstrates a commitment to the topic
- Writes in a lively, sincere, or humorous way when appropriate
- Writes about "I," rather than "you"

Grading rubric attached with name on it ____/5

Final Draft on time and typed: ____/10

Rough draft(s) included: ____/5

Writing score ____/50

Comments:

TOTAL: ____/70