

This I Believe is a national media project engaging people in writing, sharing, and discussing the core values and beliefs that guide their daily lives. NPR airs these three-minute essays on *All Things Considered* and *Weekend Edition Sunday*.

This I Believe is based on a 1950s radio program of the same name, hosted by acclaimed journalist Edward R. Murrow. In creating *This I Believe*, Murrow said the program sought "to point to the common meeting grounds of beliefs, which is the essence of brotherhood and the floor of our civilization."

In spite of the fear of atomic warfare, increasing consumerism, and loss of spiritual values, the essayists on Murrow's series expressed tremendous hope.

Each day, millions of Americans gathered by their radios to hear compelling essays from the likes of Eleanor Roosevelt, Jackie Robinson, Helen Keller, and Harry Truman as well as corporate leaders, cab drivers, scientists, and secretaries— anyone able to distill into a few minutes the guiding principles by which they lived. Their words brought comfort and inspiration to a country worried about the Cold War, McCarthyism, and racial division.

In reviving *This I Believe*, series host Jay Allison and producer Dan Gediman say their goal is not to persuade Americans to agree on the same beliefs. Rather, they hope to encourage people to begin the much more difficult task of developing respect for beliefs different from their own.

Assignment:

1. Log onto www.thisibelieve.org and read or listen to a minimum of two essays on topics of your choice. This will give you an idea of the kind of essay you are expected to write and the variety of styles people use. Most essays are conversational and have at least one anecdote included within the essay. On the next page are some that may interest you. (You may search for them by author or title.)
2. Begin to brainstorm for your own "This I Believe" essay. Consider your core values and beliefs. What story or anecdote can you share that illustrates a belief that you hold strongly? Read the attached "Essay-Writing Instructions" from *This I Believe* (also available online).
3. Write your own response entitled "This I Believe" (**300-500 words**). Title it and put it in your portfolio.

We Are Each Other's Business



In high school, Eboo Patel failed to support a friend facing anti-Semitism. Now, the Chicago interfaith youth organizer believes honoring diversity means having the courage to actively speak up for it.

Be Cool to the Pizza Delivery Dude



We know them. We depend on them. We call them out on cold, rainy nights. Now, NPR listener Sarah Adams tells us why her life philosophy is built around being cool to the pizza delivery dude.

Disrupting My Comfort Zone



With movies like *A Beautiful Mind* and *Apollo 13* to his credit, Oscar-winning producer Brian Grazer could rest on his laurels. But that's not for him. Grazer believes in disrupting his comfort zone.

A Feeling of Wildness



Nature writer David Gessner believes you don't have to climb Everest or raft the Amazon to find wildness. It's often found much closer to home, in our backyards and in the experiences of daily life.

The Power and Mystery of Naming Things



The Vagina Monologues playwright Eve Ensler believes in speaking up. She says when we name the things that make us uncomfortable or afraid, then demons are faced, silences are broken and freedom is won.

The People Who Love You When No One Else Will



When her biological family fell apart, NPR listener Cecile Gilmer found a new family. She believes the love and kindness these chosen "relatives" gave her allowed her to become an open and loving person.

The Making of Poems



A series of tragedies during his youth left Gregory Orr confused and disillusioned. Now, the University of Virginia professor believes poetry – and the making of poems – has helped him live and heal.

The Hardest Work You Will Ever Do



As a hospice volunteer, listener Mary Cook shares in the grief of others. But it was her own loss that taught her how to heal. She believes that recovering from grief requires not a battle, but surrender.

The Person I Want to Bring Into This World



Social worker Laura Shipler Chico is about to have her first baby. In naming the traits she and her husband hope the child will possess, she believes she'll discover the things she values the most.

Unleashing the Power of Creativity and Intelligence



Bill Gates founded Microsoft on the dream of putting a computer in every home and office. He says he built his company on the belief that technology, creativity and intelligence can change the world.

A Balance Between Nature and Nurture



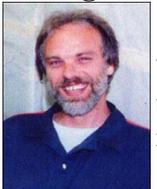
In debating nature versus nurture, Gloria Steinem believes we are asking the wrong question. She says we are an unpredictable mix of both, a mix that creates endless possibilities for a better future.

Science Nourishes the Mind and the Soul



Physicist Brian Green believes that in unraveling the mysteries of the universe, we can find an appreciation for our own place in the cosmos, and be inspired by the drama of exploration and discovery.

Caring Makes Us Human



When a stray cat came into the yard at a Michigan prison, Troy Chapman and his fellow inmates discovered they enjoyed caring for the cat. The experience helped Chapman realize how much he missed kindness — receiving it as well as giving it.

Being Content with Myself



Massachusetts teenager Kamaal Majeed believes being content with himself and defining his own life are more important than adhering to any racial stereotypes that his peers may try to force upon him.

Navigating Turbulent Waters



Jimmy Liao had a difficult relationship with his father, but he fondly remembers the fishing trips he took with his dad. Liao is now a biologist and he says that fish taught him how to handle life's rough currents.

Do What You Love



Tony Hawk has turned what many consider a childhood activity into a professional career. Now for Hawk, skateboarding is not only a job, it's a means of expression and a foundation for personal belief.

This I Believe Essay-Writing Instructions

[available at <http://www.thisibelieve.org/essaywritingtips.html>]

We invite you to contribute to this project by writing and submitting your own statement of personal belief. 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.

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.

In introducing the original series, host Edward R. Murrow said, "Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent." We would argue that the need is as great now as it was 50 years ago. We are eager for your contribution.