Kirkwood Community College

Fall 2009

College 101 with Kris Tharp

This I Believe Essay

When you write your essay:
1. Limit your essay to fewer than 500 words.
2. Describe an event that shaped your beliefs or a person who inspired them.
3. Avoid sermons and editorials—no soapbox declamations!

This I Believe Essay-Writing Instructions

Tell a story: Be specific. Ground your belief in the events of your life. Consider moments when belief was formed, 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.
Your essay should:
Have a deep personal meaning to you.
Although the tone may sound persuasive, the purpose is more reflective than persuasive.
Base the essay upon your personal experiences or anecdotes.
Write in the first person (I), be conversational, or entertaining.
Be subjective in tone.
Be informal in tone, language, and subject matter.

Tips To Add Audience Appeal To Personal Essays

1. Be sure your essay is about something you care strongly enough about to elaborate about it. Readers want to know what you know, feel what you feel, and understand exactly where you’re coming from.

2. While the idea for the essay must be personal, make the frame big enough to allow your reader to find parallels between your experience and theirs. Give readers the opportunity to say, “Ah! Yes, I’ve never been there or done that, but I can relate to what the author is talking about.” Even if readers have not been on a mission trip to Africa, the effective writer must draw in an audience to show a more universal implication of a very personal experience or belief.

3. If you are writing about a small personal occurrence, put your idea in a context that gives the reader insight to both the small moment and the wider perspective. Think of your essay as a camera lens. You might start by describing a fine detail (a specific moment in the narrative), then opens up the lens to take in the wide view (the general/global backdrop), then close the piece by narrowing back to the fine detail.

4. Use details to draw the reader in. Be specific and avoid using abstract expressions and phrases such as “the best day of my life” or “I’d never known greater grief” to describe emotions of love or loss. Make the emotions real and immediate by noting specifics and details that draw the reader into your experience.

5. Employ all the senses to convey your ideas to the reader: sight, sound, taste, touch, and hearing.

6. Make sure that beyond all the idea development, your readers can summarize the MAIN IDEA that you BELIEVE. You should not have to hit the readers over the head with a summary statement such as “What I am trying to say...” or “What I really mean is...” In fact, such a closing is almost insulting or an indication that you fear you have danced around the belief without making it crystal clear. You must aim to leave the readers clear and satisfied—whether they agree with what you believe or not. Sometimes a brief echo of the opening is the most satisfying clincher to bring a personal essay full circle.
Summary Chart for *This I Believe* Essay

For this part of the assignment, find an essay at www.thisibelieve.org and listen to the author read the essay. Pick an essay that appeals to you because of the topic, author, or ideas and answer the questions on the chart. **Print the text of the essay and include it with this paper.**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title:</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Author:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Information about the author:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Lead or hook that opens the essay:</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Personal experience example(s):</td>
<td></td>
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<tr>
<td>Tone of voice and words emphasized:</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Your reaction/opinion/reflection:</td>
<td></td>
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</tbody>
</table>
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25 points = Divide like this:

3 points = Summary Chart for This I Believe Essay

2 points = Copy of the essay stapled to Summary Chart

5 points = Rubric and Assignment Planning Sheet (this page)

15 points = Final draft: 350-500 words

10 extra credit points = For using the Writing Center.
Hand in Rough Draft and Writing Center Receipt.

My belief statement:

Examples or experiences I am thinking of using to explain my belief:

Title of Essay:
Sports are great
Shane Carolan

I believe sports are great. I don't just think sports are great because of the competition or all of the touchdowns, game winning shot's, or home runs. I believe sports are great because they make us believe in miracles and want to be like Mike. Sports are great because they are much more than just a game. Sport's break color barriers and impossible feats. Sports have given us role models, heroes, and legends like Tiger Woods, Michael Jordan, and Babe Ruth. Sports are great because you don't have to be a pro football player to catch the game winning touchdown in the Super Bowl you can just go in your backyard and imagine it happening. If sports weren't great then why does a high school of 3,000 students' have 7,000 people attend their football games? Because sport's give us tragedy and triumph. Great moments and bad moments. Were taught that winning isn't everything yet we still keep score and crown champion's, “you play to win the game”. Sports are great because they make us do crazy things. We yell at our TV's and have weird traditions on game day that no one would understand yet no one judges you because they have weird traditions themselves. Sports bring friends and family together because they have one thing in common, their team is playing in the big game and we want bragging rights over our friends who like the other team. We love sports because thanksgiving isn't just about turkey and stuffing it's about backyard football before the actual football game starts. Sport's are great because it proves that March is indeed full of madness and that countries don't have to prove their powerful through war but in the Olympics. Sports are great because without them we wouldn't have Nike, Air Jordan's, Adidas, Reebok, or Under Armor. If it wasn't for sports we would still be wearing short shorts, shoes with no style and we wouldn't know what swagger is. Sports are great because they make everything around us better. This is why I believe Sports are great.