

## AP English Language and Composition

### Summer Assignment 2024

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Hi, there.

Your summer assignment is a chance for you to read a variety of texts, explore ideas, and write in response to what you are reading and thinking. The assignment has multiple components, and all of the work is due the first week of school. I have provided links to some of the items I want you check out. We will piggyback on the summer assignment during the first few weeks of school.

#### 1. Organizing Yourself.

**Assignment:** Get a notebook of your choice with the style of paper you prefer (lined, graph, blank, bullet point, etc.). Your notebook should be a good size—not teeny tiny. It can be a spiral notebook, a composition notebook, or even a sketchbook, which ever you decide to get, you should love your notebook. It should make you happy and you should feel good about it. We will use this notebook to create notes for all sorts of things: rhetorical analysis, devices, appeals, perspectives, etc. It will eventually contain foldouts and index cards, and wash tape, and anything else you may want to add to it. The point is this notebook should feel like you.

**Why it's important:** The process of learning something often starts out feeling disorganized and unwieldy; the most important aspects are not always remarkable. Consolidation helps organize and solidify learning. This notebook will serve as a means to consolidate what you have learned throughout the year, allowing you to retrieve the significant progress we make. Here you will find your progress as you begin to unwrap the literature and all it encompasses. Make this notebook yours. Decorate if you like or keep it clean. The choice is yours—*This I believe*.

#### 2. Reading and Annotating.

**Assignment:** AP English Language and Composition students are required to read *This I Believe*. You must have a hard copy of this text; electronic copies will not do—I'll explain later. You may obtain the text by purchasing it through Amazon. I have included the Amazon link for you: <https://a.co/d/5Y5BvHi>. While you are reading, you should be interacting with the text—writing in it, highlighting, underlining, circling—making a mess of it. Read and annotate a minimum of fifteen essays found in the book. If you find you are not moved or interested by an essay, leave it. Find another. Maybe get with some friends and read the essays together. Make suggestions to one another. Have discussions and use these as fodder for your annotations.

Knowing how to annotate can be tricky and overwhelming. Remember that annotation helps you interact with the text in a way that will produce meaningful discussion and writing. Basic reasons for annotations include organizing ideas (a form of pre-writing), keeps you from forgetting what's most important, identifies information you find interesting or have questions about (you can bring these up in discussions), marks words/phrases you don't understand (look these up), and allows for direct interaction between the reader and the text. This begins the process of creating commentary and analysis. I invite you to respond to the essays you will be reading right there on the page. Connect the ideas to your own lives. Really make it a meaningful read.

**Why it's important:**

A hard copy allows you to absorb more information. Readers of print books grasp and remember more of the plot or the knowledge presented in the text than “screen” readers do. It also makes for a tangible and more pleasing experience overall allowing you to establish “a feel” for the book you’re holding in your hands—it becomes an experience (like your notebook). It becomes familiar (like your notebook). When you add annotations to this experience, the interactions between you, the book, and the ideas presented allow you develop a relationship, as it were, with the characters (people) and ideas depicted. Annotations help you uncover patterns, notice important words, and identify main points, but more importantly, annotations allow you to make connections and see your thinking, making the book yours. Only in this way will you connect, truly, with the characters (people) and ideas presented within the pages of the text. Only in this way will the experience be lasting and one you can revisit time and time again—*This I believe*.

**3. Reflection.**

**Assignment:** Once you have read and annotated fifteen essays you will then write a reflection for seven of the essays. Choose seven you connected with deeply and were meaningful to you in some way—this can be in a personal way or because it prompted your thinking and/or philosophizing. This is where your handy dandy notebook comes in. Create one full-page of sketch notes for each essay of your choosing—you’ll have five when you’re done. Sketch notes are rich visual notes created from a mix of handwriting, drawings, hand-lettering, shapes, and visual elements like arrows, boxes, lines, and color. In your sketch notes you should include the following: **1.** a headline, **2.** message the author conveys, **3.** the author’s values/needs (these may be implied) and how these are conveyed, **4.** evidence the author uses to explain why they believe the way they do, **5.** any counterarguments they may have included, **6.** identify tone and provide an explanation of how the tone was created, **7.** Connect the text back to you (include any powerful words/ phrases and explain why these were impacting to you). You’re not limited to words/phrases. Maybe the topic was of interest to you. Your sketch notes should fill the page; there should be very little white space available unless it is there for artistic reasons—this should be evident.

**Why it's important:**

Sketch notes allow you to crystallize information as a result of their visual nature. By creating visual representations of ideas, concepts, and characters, individuals can engage their creative thinking, retain information more effectively, and communicate more clearly. It’s about taking notes in a visual way that makes sense to you and enhances your understanding. When content is presented visually, it is easier to identify patterns and according to Steve Jobs, making connections is a creative process. Visuals stimulate imagination and influence cognitive abilities such as recall. They also serve as a quick way to review without having to resort to reading the entire thing all over again (annotations work in much the same way). Your notebook will serve this purpose—*This I believe*.

#### 4. Writing.

In introducing the original series, host Edward R. Murrow said, “Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent.” I would argue that the need is as great now as it was 60 plus years ago.

For this portion of the assignment, we are guided by the original *This I Believe* series and the **producers’ invitation** to those who wrote essays in the 1950s. Their advice holds up well. Please consider it carefully in writing your piece.

*This invites you to make a very great contribution: nothing less than a statement of your personal beliefs, of the values which rule your thought and action. Your essay should be about three minutes in length when read [a]loud, written in a style as you yourself speak, and total no more than 500 words.*

*We know this is a tough job. What we want is so intimate that no one can write it for you. You must write it yourself, in the language most natural to you. We ask you to write in your own words and then record in your own voice. You may even find that it takes a request like this for you to reveal some of your own beliefs to yourself. If you set them down, they may become of untold meaning to others.*

*We would like you to tell not only what you believe, but how you reached your beliefs, and if they have grown, what made them grow. This necessarily must be highly personal. That is what we anticipate and want.*

*It may help you in formulating your credo if we tell you also what we do not want. We do not want a sermon, religious or lay; we do not want editorializing or sectarianism or ‘finger-pointing.’ We do not even want your views on the American way of life, or democracy or free enterprise. These are important but for another occasion. We want to know what you live by. And we want it in terms of ‘I,’ not the editorial ‘We.’*

*But we do ask you to confine yourself to affirmatives: This means refraining from saying what you do not believe. Your beliefs may well have grown in clarity to you by a process of elimination and rejection, but for our part, we must avoid negative statements lest we become a medium for the criticism of beliefs, which is the very opposite of our purpose.*

*We are sure the statement we ask from you can have wide and lasting influence. Never has the need for personal philosophies of this kind been so urgent. Your belief, simply and sincerely spoken, is sure to stimulate and help those who hear it. We are confident it will enrich them. May we have your contribution?*

*\*\*Adapted from the invitation sent to essayists featured in the original “This I Believe” series.\*\**

## THIS I BELIEVE...

**Assignment:** Writing your own statement of personal belief can be a powerful tool for self-reflection. It can also be a wonderful thing to share with family, friends, and colleagues. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

**Tell a story about you:** Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it in the events that have shaped your core values. 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 400 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.

**Be positive:** Write about what you do believe, not what you don’t believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.

**Be personal:** Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Avoid speaking in the editorial “we.” Tell a story from your own life; this is not an opinion piece about social ideals. 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 until you find the words, tone, and story that truly echoes your belief and your voice.

**Type it out:** Type your *This I believe* essay following the format below: You do not have to have the same number of paragraphs as the sample, but you should have multiple paragraphs unless you are choosing not to as a rhetorical device.

**Include a Title:** Once you have finished writing your *I believe* essay, give it a title.

**Print it out:** Print two copies of your final draft—one you will turn in to me and the other you will go into your notebook.

***On the next page is an example of one of the essays submitted to the program.  
Your final draft should follow this same format as the sample provided.  
Please type your final draft and print it to turn during the first week of school***

# THIS I BELIEVE...

*Dogs Will Be Dogs*

By Devin Alexander - Boise, Idaho

*I believe that dogs are more loyal than humans. Dogs do not judge you, they don't care how much money you make, where you work, and they are grateful for any attention. Dogs do not perceive the world as humans do. Whenever I'm going through a tough time, I always know my dog will be there for me, unlike people. Since she sees me as her owner, the one she needs to protect, I can talk to her, knowing that she'll never backstab me. My dog would never say anything to hurt me. Whenever I'm looking for something better to come along, I think about how dogs are happy with what they have, and how they are appreciative. Dogs can forgive much faster than I can, and they don't hold grudges. They don't care if you're late to dinner, although they may be hungry. I believe dogs are a person's best friend. They bring comfort to our lives, and express unconditional love. If only humans could be more like dogs. I believe if humans were like dogs, the world would be a more peaceful place, no hate or criticizing one another. If ever I'm sick, sad, or just had a bad day, I know my dog will sit on my lap and NEVER move. A friend usually won't stick around if you're sick; they always seem too busy to care, but dogs aren't that way. I believe in the way dogs live, especially mine. If only I could be as happy as she is each day, without having to worry about anything. But my days are filled with endless deadlines and stress. I love how dogs can live in the present. While I struggle to decide what to eat, my dog jumps up and down eagerly waiting for the same meal at the same time every day.*

*I believe that dogs are loyal companions and can take the place of a human friend. Humans are devoted when it serves our purpose to do so, but dogs are loyal no matter what.*

**Why it's important:** Aside from being a powerful tool for self-reflection, this exercise will allow you to begin developing a voice. You should not "marry" your first draft—ever. But rather use it as a springboard to develop your writing techniques by deliberately including rhetorical devices. If you don't know what I mean by rhetorical devices, this look it up. Rhetorical devices are aplenty and in constant use around you daily. Give it a go.

Have a wonderful summer break.

I'll see you guys soon.

M. Ruiz

