



The Personal Philosophies  
of Remarkable Men and Women

**MIDDLE SCHOOL CURRICULUM**

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## INTRODUCTION AND BACKGROUND OF THIS I BELIEVE

Thank you for your interest in the This I Believe middle school curriculum. This I Believe holds a special place in the hallways of modern broadcasting, and now we are happy to offer a chance for a younger audience to join in sharing their personal stories, beliefs, and thoughts.

Based on a 1950s radio series of the same name, This I Believe, Inc., is a non-profit organization engaging people from all walks of life in writing, sharing, and discussing the core values that guide our daily lives. Featured on public radio since 2005, these 500-word essays get to the core of one's personal philosophy of life.

As original host Edward R. Murrow once said, the goal of the program is, "To point to the common meeting grounds of belief, which is the essence of brotherhood and the floor of our civilization." It is with this attitude that This I Believe engages a new audience—one that increasingly must deal with issues that until this day and age were reserved for our elders. Such is the way of the world.

This curriculum was designed with the middle school student in mind. Certainly, high school and college students have much to say, but our younger scholars should also be allowed their moment in the sun. The following pages are but one take on this idea. or, it was stated succinctly so long ago that, "out of the mouths of babes" come the most relevant and astounding thoughts.

### **AUTHOR'S NOTE AND INFORMATION**

Amanda Cadran is the author of this curriculum. She is currently a middle-school writing and grammar teacher at St. Mary Magdalene School in Apex, NC. Prior to becoming a teacher, Amanda worked as an assistant for former Secretary of State Dr. Henry Kissinger and in public relations for the national touring act Railroad Earth. She graduated from Lehigh University in Bethlehem, PA with degrees in English and journalism and a Master's degree in political science. She has over 10 years' experience in writing and editing for newspapers, magazines, and radio, including NPR affiliate WDIY in eastern Pennsylvania.

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## BACKGROUND ON THE RELEVANCE OF THIS I BELIEVE FOR MIDDLE SCHOOL STUDENTS

It has been said that middle school teachers are born, not made. Indeed, teaching at the middle school level is quite unique. Our students are emotionally aware beyond the elementary years, yet are not ready for the rigors of high school. They are constantly changing, growing, thinking, and questioning. As their teachers, we have the awe-inspiring ability to help them know themselves at a time when it is still “okay” to talk to teachers, ask questions, and share feelings. What is successful in the classroom one week may not work the next, as our students change with the winds. Yet, our ability to get them thinking critically and abstractly is a fundamental challenge and reward—as the human brain continues to grow throughout these years we can have a truly life-altering effect on how our students think. This I Believe is the kind of activity that will engage and confront your students with questions about how they perceive themselves in their increasingly growing world.

Middle school students fall into two developmental stages: pre-adolescence and adolescence. Webster’s Medical Dictionary defines pre-adolescence as “the period of human development just preceding adolescence; *specifically* : the period between the approximate ages of 9 and 12.” Adolescence then, would begin somewhere around the age of 12, although defining this stage in life is not an easy task. What most researchers agree on is that adolescence, and to a lesser degree, pre-adolescence includes (but is not limited to):

- An increased level of adult hormones
- Thoughts about dating
- Thoughts about independence from parents
- The change when friends’ opinions begin to matter just as much or more than the opinions of adults
- First thoughts on an individual self-concept

Just what these two stages represent for our students cannot be overstated in terms of importance. An activity inclined toward introspective thinking, such as writing a This I Believe essay is perfectly suited for these age groups who, according to many psychologists, are just beginning to develop a solid personal identity.

According to developmental psychologist Erik Erikson, “the main task of adolescence is to achieve a state of identity.” His theory stresses adolescence as a “time-out period” when youth in democratic societies “try on” various identities before eventually deciding which is best. In this time frame, Erikson stresses the importance of idealism in developing a strong identity, as it aids in the search for people, values, and ideas that can serve as aids.

Erikson’s ideas have spurred many other researchers on the topic of identity. Most agree that it is through “crisis” periods, or periods of challenges, that identity is formed. Using this period in their lives as a backdrop to developing a personal philosophy can aid in this process, so crucial to future successes. In an age of ever-increasing social and familial stresses, with constant intrusions from television, music, cell phones, and the Internet, some say it is harder than ever for today’s youth to steer clear of pressures to become independent thinkers.

When we understand how important and trying this time period can be for our students, the question becomes, how do we manage to help our students figure out who they are and what they want to become?

The following pages contain a five-day lesson plan for incorporating 'This I Believe into your classroom. This curriculum aims to serve as a guide, but is by no means all-inclusive. Use the plans in correlation with thematic units on character or friendship, or in conjunction with a writing unit on the personal narrative style. The curriculum begins with a look at values and how they shape our lives. It continues by bringing personal experience into the picture, and linking the two lessons together with a writing project. Resources on paragraph writing are also included.

**Student Activity: Who Are You? Finding Out What Is Important**

Materials: Values Activity Sheet (page 13 of this curriculum)  
Dictionary – class set

Overview: Today you will introduce the project. You can use the following text or change it to suit your needs.

“What is an identity? Who here feels like they have a strong personal identity? What does it mean to have a strong identity?” (Accept all answers.)

“Could we say that forming an identity is difficult? How could this be true?” (Steer conversation toward discussion of peer pressures, etc.)

“Today we are going to begin a project aimed at helping you discover a little bit more about yourself and what is important to you. What is important to you today may change over time, so we are going to focus on your feelings and thoughts right now. This is part of a radio project called *This I Believe*, and for over 50 years, people all over America have written their thoughts on things that are important to them. By the end of the project you will have a written reminder for years to come about how you felt at this time in your life.”

Instructions: *Class discussion:* Begin by talking about some of life’s important moments—birthdays, religious events, holidays, etc. Talk about why each is important to us, and why we remember those times.

Explain that the “This I Believe” essay is not an autobiography—it is a personal narrative, a story that focuses on a small piece of your students’ lives. This I Believe is about values we hold dear—the moments that teach us who we are. It is not a factual retelling or a timeline. Spend as much time as necessary to make this distinction—it will be important for the remainder of this project.

“First we will spend some time talking about values that are important to us. What is a value?”

Explain and reinforce that a value is a characteristic that is important to leading a fulfilling life. Brainstorm a list of words students think of when you mention values, and focus on those that have a connection with the words they are about to encounter.

Have students look at the Values Activity Sheet. They are to work on this for the remainder of class and finish for homework.

**Student Activity:     **Important Moments****

Materials:           Values Activity Sheet from yesterday  
                  Important Moments activity sheet (page 14 of this curriculum)  
                  Dictionary – class set

Overview:           Today you will take the project a step further by adding personal experience into the discussion about values. Students will now begin to think of their own stories in the context of important values as they focus on memories of learning and growing.

Instructions:         Go over the Values Activity Sheet from yesterday’s class. Make sure to highlight differences in some of the terms (knowledge/wisdom, etc.).

When ready: “Now that we are familiar with some of life’s important values, it is time to think of situations when you have experienced them in your own life. Answer the questions on the Important Moments sheet to the best of your ability. The important thing is to think of times when you experienced some of the values we just talked about.”

Have each student work for 15 to 25 minutes. Be prepared to help students who need help remembering these experiences. It is not often we are asked to think of these kinds of experiences, so this activity may take longer than expected. The answers from these questions will provide the basis for the This I Believe essay; therefore, it is important that a lot of thought goes into this particular activity.

**Student Activity:     Outlining**

Materials:           Values Activity Sheet  
 Important Moments activity sheet with answers  
 Dictionary – class set

Objective:           Today students will share some of the experiences they brainstormed yesterday and choose a smaller list to work with. This list will eventually be narrowed down to one moment, which will be the focus of the final essay.

To begin: “Yesterday you were asked to think about some of the more challenging, and to be sure, interesting moments in your life. I want to talk to you about some of these moments, and what you learned.”

Take the first half of this class period to talk and have students share their thoughts, going through each question. Creating a word web on the board is a good way to keep track of the students’ thoughts, and where the conversation is headed. As you go through each question, make sure to ask for words that denote emotions surrounding these events and the values they associated with each event. Explain that the finished project will be a narrative essay, in first-person, that will be rich with details and imagery. More than anything, it should be honest.

As the discussion winds down, ask students to take another look at their answers from yesterday and highlight three that the student would be comfortable discussing with others.

For the remainder of class and for homework tonight, they are to create an outline for each event, as follows. Specific words and details will help make the next step easier.

- I. Brief description of event
  - a. What lesson and/or value did I learn?\*
  - b. How did it make me feel about it then?
  - c. How have I used this lesson since, when I make decisions?
  - d. How do I feel about it now?

\*A-D should be answered in complete sentences

*Example*

- I. Not being allowed to go to a concert with friends last summer
  - a. I learned that I can’t always get what I want, even if I don’t understand why. I learned about respect and self-control.
  - b. At the time, I was upset, mad, jealous, and didn’t agree with my mom’s decision.



- c. After that day, I know I might not be able to do everything I want to do.
- d. I am still sad I missed it, but starting to understand why I couldn't go. Some of my friends got in trouble for trying to stay out too late and maybe that is why my mom didn't want me to go.

The thing to remember is that not every story will have a positive ending. Sometimes beliefs are formed during difficult circumstances.

Feel free to have some students work together in pairs or small groups. For the remainder of the project, put students in situations that work best for them—some students need to work independently to avoid distractions; others work well with input from their peers.

Mention that each student will want to begin thinking of which moment was easiest to write about. This will be important for tomorrow.

**Student Activity: Telling My Story**

Materials: My Story Memory Chart (page 15 of this curriculum)  
Values Activity Sheet  
Important Moments activity sheet with answers  
Dictionary – class set

Objective: Take the outlines from last night and begin to focus on just one moment for the final essay. By the end of Day 4, each student should have a good idea of what he or she will be writing about for the final assignment.

Teacher Instructions: Begin by asking your class about last night’s homework. Steer the conversation into any challenges/difficulties they may have had. You may want to share that it is one thing to think about or remember a childhood memory, but another to share that story in words.

Next, students will gather into pairs or small groups and spend a few minutes sharing their outlines with a classmate. After a few minutes ask them to stop and put a star next to the outline they feel they have the most to talk about. This will most likely end up being the basis for their personal narrative essay.

Next, each student will fill out the “My Story Memory Chart” for the outline they just starred. This will be a good test to see if they have enough material for the essay.

Finish the chart and have ready for tomorrow, when writing will begin.

**Student Activity: Putting It All Together**

Materials: My Story Memory Chart with answers  
Projector screen with computer hookup, if available

Objective: Today students will read examples of This I Believe essays to get experience reading personal narratives. Remember, the style is different from that of an autobiography or persuasive essay. Depending on the grade level of your students, and their writing experience in different genres, your students may need to be guided through the differences.

The following are links to several This I Believe essays, all of which are appropriate and accessible for the middle school student. As you read through these essays, make note of the tone and style of each. You may want to point out various writing techniques, such as repetition, symbolism, and imagery. If you have a projector hookup available, you can listen to most of these essays being read by their authors.

[A Drive to Achieve the Extraordinary](http://www.thisibelieve.org/essay/34055)—The *Guinness World Records* book fascinated Juliet Frerking when she was a child. Beyond the oddball accomplishments it listed, the book inspired Frerking to attempt feats in her own life that people told her were impossible.  
<http://www.thisibelieve.org/essay/34055>

[Free Hearts and Minds at Work](http://www.thisibelieve.org/essay/16931)—In 1947, Jackie Robinson pioneered the integration of American professional athletics by becoming the first black player in Major League Baseball. From an essay recorded in 1952, he discusses his fight against prejudice.  
<http://www.thisibelieve.org/essay/16931>

[The Bird Who Broke Through the Window](http://www.thisibelieve.org/essay/15913)—Dylan always viewed himself as a spectator in life, until a surprising experience taught him that anyone, and everyone, can make a difference.  
<http://www.thisibelieve.org/essay/15913>

[Do What You Love](http://www.thisibelieve.org/essay/22870)—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.  
<http://www.thisibelieve.org/essay/22870>

*Student directive:* It is now time to begin the writing process. Your finished product will be between 350 and 500 words, which is about four to six paragraphs.

Here are some guidelines to remember when you begin writing your essay. These may be different than what you usually are asked to do in writing class, but this is a different kind of essay.

1. **It's all about you** – Write about you and your beliefs about how to live your life. Tell us your story in the first person, and try to avoid sentences like “We feel this way” or “You should feel this way, too.”
2. **Keep it personal** – Don't try to use words or phrases you wouldn't normally say. Remember, if you wouldn't be comfortable saying the words out loud, it is probably too formal.
3. **Timing is everything** – Make sure that you read your finished essay out loud. It shouldn't be more than three minutes long when read at a normal speaking rate.
4. **Say what you *do* believe**, not what you *don't* – Write about what you think, but not at the expense of others. Keep the focus on you, and what you believe, not what you disagree with.
5. **Have fun!** How many times are you allowed to be 100% free with your choice of topic, and what you want to say about it? This is your chance to write about your personal philosophy of life, so don't be shy—let it out!

The next few pages will delve into four important topics for writing: creating paragraphs, introductions, juicy details, and convincing conclusions. At this point, it is time for students to begin constructing drafts of their essays. This curriculum highly recommends following the five-step method of writing: pre-writing\*, drafting, revising, editing, and publishing. Your classroom may utilize these steps in the way you best see fit. The following instructions have been written with traditional paragraph construction in mind.

\*All of the previous work for this project can be considered pre-writing. It may be a good idea to have students bring all of their activity sheets and notes with them when they begin their drafts.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## VALUES ACTIVITY SHEET

Below is a list of some of the values that may be important to you. First, define the value in a few words (use a dictionary if you need to). Then, put a star next to the five values that are the most important to you. Be prepared to explain why you feel this way!

Honesty: \_\_\_\_\_

Cooperation: \_\_\_\_\_

Integrity: \_\_\_\_\_

Enthusiasm: \_\_\_\_\_

Compassion: \_\_\_\_\_

Self-Control: \_\_\_\_\_

Love: \_\_\_\_\_

Leadership: \_\_\_\_\_

Empathy: \_\_\_\_\_

Confidence: \_\_\_\_\_

Respect: \_\_\_\_\_

Skill: \_\_\_\_\_

Faith: \_\_\_\_\_

Sincerity: \_\_\_\_\_

Knowledge: \_\_\_\_\_

Reliability: \_\_\_\_\_

Wisdom: \_\_\_\_\_

Patience: \_\_\_\_\_

Freedom: \_\_\_\_\_

Flexibility: \_\_\_\_\_

Creativity: \_\_\_\_\_

Responsibility: \_\_\_\_\_

Dedication: \_\_\_\_\_

Hope: \_\_\_\_\_

Loyalty: \_\_\_\_\_

Charity: \_\_\_\_\_

Success: \_\_\_\_\_

Prudence: \_\_\_\_\_

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

## IMPORTANT MOMENTS

Answer the following questions on a separate sheet of paper. For each question, identify at least one value from yesterday's activity that played a role in this event.

- When did you first realize your family loves you?
- When did you learn that it is better to tell the truth?
- Who was the first person to make you feel invincible?
- When did you realize you could be anything you want to be?
- When did you learn that life isn't always fair?
- Who taught you that sometimes things don't work out the way you want them to?
- When did you learn that you can't always get what you want?
- How did you learn about the Tooth Fairy, or other characters?
- Has anyone ever tested your faith?
- Have you ever done something that you regret? What did you learn from that moment?

These questions are not always easy to answer. Take enough time to think. If you are stuck, ask your teacher, a friend, or someone at home to help you "unglue" your memories!

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

### MY STORY – MEMORY CHART

Fill in the questions with information about the event you have picked.

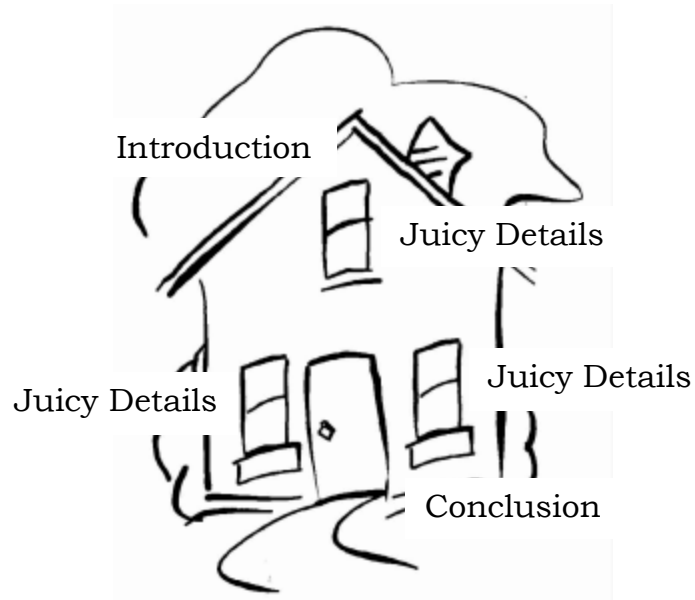
1. \_\_\_\_\_ is the event I am describing.
2. It happened when I was \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Where did it happen? Describe the place \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_
4. \_\_\_\_\_ were the people involved.
5. Close your eyes and picture yourself on that day. List five adjectives that come to mind.  
\_\_\_\_\_
6. When I think back on this day, it makes me feel \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_ inside.
7. I would want to tell people that before this event I thought that  
\_\_\_\_\_.
8. Now, I know that \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
9. Some values that were important to me back then were \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_.
10. Some values that are important to me now are  
\_\_\_\_\_

## WRITING WORKSHOP – CREATING PARAGRAPHS

One way to think about writing paragraphs is to envision a house. A house cannot exist without a foundation and a roof—regardless of what is inside the house, those two features are all-important. What exists inside the house, on the other hand, is what makes it unique.

Likewise, paragraphs need an introduction and conclusion sentence to anchor them together. The details in the middle make the paragraph special.

We can picture it like this:\*



In terms of the three parts of the paragraph (introduction, juicy details, and conclusion), the introduction and conclusion have a lot in common.

The introduction is like a sneak preview of a movie. It gives the reader an idea of what to expect in the paragraph, but doesn't reveal everything. The introduction must mention the main idea of the paragraph, or the "Big Picture" and engage the reader in some way.

Juicy details provide the most interest for your paragraph. They explain and "prove" the statements made in your introduction.

The conclusion comes back to the main idea, but says it in a different way than the introduction. Conclusions aim to wrap up the paragraph, but try to avoid saying, "This is why..." or "That is why..."

\* This visual can be made into a transparency to show students how the introduction and conclusion "support" the juicy details.



## WRITER'S WORKSHOP – WRITING THE PARAGRAPH, A BASIC MODEL

After reviewing basic grammar rules and the parts of a paragraph, the house transparency is placed on the overhead. At this point the outline is introduced as a method for pre-writing. The outline format is as follows:

- I. (Topic)
  - a. (Detail 1)
  - b. (Detail 2)
  - c. (Detail 3) and so on...

After discussing this, a sample paragraph is written on the overhead with the students' help. This paragraph, while extremely basic, shows how an outline organizes thoughts. The prompt is "I love pizza because..." An example follows:

- I. Pizza is my favorite food
  - a. Toppings
  - b. Gooney cheese
  - c. Juicy and hot

At this point, the paragraph is written. Each of the topic points under Topic "I" become a full sentence. The concluding sentence is made by going back to the beginning and wrapping up the paragraph. Using the transparency, each sentence fits into one part of the pizza.

An example follows:

Pizza is my very favorite food. I really love all of the toppings I can put on it, like pepperoni and mushrooms. Also, I love it when the cheese is really warm and gooney. My favorite part of a pizza is when it is juicy and hot. I could eat pizza every day.

The rationale for this model is to show how paragraph writing is not a mystery, but rather like a recipe for baking. By following the "recipe" (the outline) students get their ideas on paper and it is less likely they will get stuck when trying to write the paragraph itself. This model also prevents a lot of overlapping details.

## WRITER'S WORKSHOP – INTRODUCTIONS

The introduction may just be the most important part of a paragraph or an essay. It is the first thing your reader sees and can interest a potential reader to continue on in your work.

First, we'll focus on introductory sentences.

Introductory sentences set up the rest of your paragraph. They introduce the main idea, without getting too specific. There are several ways you can choose to begin a paragraph, but make sure there is no question as to what the rest of the paragraph will discuss.

Techniques for your introductory sentence:

- Ask a question that gets to the point of your paragraph: “When was the last time you saw someone do the right thing?”
- Make a list: “The next time you go to a museum, make sure you have the right clothes, supplies, and fellow travelers with you!” In this case, each of these list items would be turned into a separate detail sentence.
- Share a story: “I will never forget the last time I had to make a difficult choice.” You would then go on to explain what happened.
- Use a quote related to your topic. There are wonderful websites online that provide thousands of quotes for you to use. Make sure you credit the original author!

Techniques and tips for introductory paragraphs:

- Don't wait too long to get into the actual story. If you set up your essay with a quote or unusual fact, make sure you quickly get to the main idea.
- Rhetorical questions are questions that don't really have answers. They are posed in an essay, often in the beginning, to get the reader thinking of a certain topic. Rhetorical questions can be quite effective, but be careful not to overuse them. One or two rhetorical questions can go a long way in terms of effectiveness, but more than that will be overkill. Example: “Have you ever had to trust someone with a secret?”
- Don't worry so much about length here. Sometimes a good two- to three-sentence introduction can say all you need to say.
- Use action: An active voice with strong verbs will grab your reader's attention. Instead of starting out explaining what your essay will be about, tell the reader.

*Example:* Instead of “This is my story about the day I learned my parents loved me unconditionally,” say “My heart soared as I came to a conclusion about the most important value of all: love.”

## WRITER'S WORKSHOP – JUICY DETAILS

Even though the introduction and conclusion of your essay hold it together (kind of like bookends), it is the juicy details that give your essay personality. There are a few things to keep in mind when working on your detail sentences.

Tips for creating juicy detail sentences that work:

- Stay on track: Don't let your enthusiasm become a runaway train! Keep your details moving in a progressive order, and re-read all work to check for details that are out of place.
- Keep your transitions smooth: Use transition words to keep your paragraph flowing well. Transitions are useful for many purposes, such as adding thoughts (also, as well as), showing consequences (as a result, therefore), showing similarity and contrast (likewise, instead, but, however), and sequence (first of all, soon, earlier, later on).
- The long and short of it: A nice mix of simple, compound, and complex sentences keeps your writing fresh. Double check your work to make sure that you're using a good amount of each!
- Same old, same old: Check to see that you aren't starting too many sentences with the same word. This doesn't mean that repetition of a phrase can't be powerful.
- He said, she said: When telling a story to a friend, we usually use the word "said" quite a bit. That is okay, but when we are reading, it helps to vary your writing with other words that may be more specific. Did he "speak," "mumble," or "shriek?" The differences can be quite big!
- Spice it up with describing words: Adjectives and adverbs are modifying words that tell things like how many, what kind, when, and how. Below is a starter list of adjectives and adverbs you can use.
- Adjectives (words that modify nouns or pronouns): adorable, adventurous, beautiful, best, brave, crowded, dangerous, dark, distinct, delightful, elated, frightening, graceful, glorious, healthy, horrible, important, incredible, joyous, kind, large, light, lucky, marvelous, massive, mysterious, nimble, ordinary, outgoing, perfect, pleasant, powerful, precious, quick, quiet, rare, robust, rough, safe, silent, soaring, tense, tremendous, useful, vivacious, vast, witty, zany
- Adverbs (words that usually tell how, when, and where an action takes place): almost, always, anxiously, boldly, briefly, calmly, defiantly, even, far, fast, fondly, gently, gracefully, hastily, justly, less, more, mysteriously, never, often, only, perfectly, politely, rapidly, really, reluctantly, safely, soon, successfully, suddenly, tomorrow, too, truthfully, very, warmly, well, wildly, yearly, yesterday

## WRITER'S WORKSHOP – CONCLUSIONS

Conclusions, whether in sentence or paragraph form, have the ability to leave your reader with a lasting feeling after they have finished reading your words. A good conclusion doesn't have to wrap up all loose ends; many wonderful conclusions leave the reader thinking long after the story has concluded.

Depending on the mood of your essay, and what choices you make as the author, there are several tips and techniques you can use when writing your own conclusions. They apply for both conclusion sentences and paragraphs.

- Summaries are for book jackets only: Try not to summarize in your conclusion. Repeating thoughts and information previously stated will force your reader to hurry through the end of your essay, and will make it more difficult for the reader to remember what you said.
- Say “bye-bye” to “This is why”: It is easy to end your paragraph with “This is why...” but a much more effective option is to restate your main idea (from the introduction) in a different way.
- Your conclusion can have several different goals. It can:
  - Challenge the reader to think: Depending on your subject, you may want the reader to walk away from your essay thinking about his or her own life. For example, if you are writing about a time when you questioned your faith, you might want to end your essay by giving your reader a challenge to test his or her own spirituality. Example: “I know I am not the only person who has ever had to fight to keep my faith alive. But I know I am stronger for having done so – hopefully I am not alone.”
  - Put your story in a bigger context: Most likely, there are people out there who can relate to your story. Sometimes it is effective to put your personal story in perspective of a bigger world. For example, “As a middle school student, I know I am not able to drive a car, vote for our president, or see an R-rated movie. Yet. These are my frustrations, but I know eventually, as with everyone who came before me, and everyone who will come after me, I will grow up.”

## This I Believe Essay-Writing Guidelines

This I Believe, Inc., invites you to contribute to this project by writing and submitting your own statement of personal belief. We understand how challenging this is—it requires intense self-examination, and no one else can do it for you. To guide you through this process, we offer these suggestions:

**Tell a story about you:** Be specific. Tell the story of events in your life that have helped shape your own personal philosophy. Consider moments when belief was formed or tested or changed. Think of your own experience, 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 own personal 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 a core belief, telling the story of why this belief is important to you.

**Be positive:** Write about what you *do* believe, not what you *don’t* believe. Avoid speaking in the editorial “we.” Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing. Avoid writing an opinion piece about civic or political issues.

**Be personal:** Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. 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.

When you have finished the final draft of your This I Believe essay, we encourage you to share your essay with others—classmates, friends, parents, and grandparents. Ask them to write their own This I Believe essays. See if you learn something new about someone close to you.

Please also consider submitting your essay to the online This I Believe Essay Collection, where more than 100,000 people have shared essays about the stories of their beliefs. **If you are under the age of 18, you may submit your essay only with a parent’s or guardian’s permission.** To submit your completed essay to This I Believe, visit the website: [www.thisibelieve.org](http://www.thisibelieve.org).

## **This I Believe Essay Submission Procedures—for Educators**

We encourage everyone—of all ages and all walks of life—to submit their essays to the online This I Believe Essay Collection. This I Believe is not a contest, but a community conversation so that we may all develop respect for each other’s beliefs, including those with which we may disagree.

All essays that fit within the This I Believe Essay-Writing Guidelines (see previous page) will be published on our website. Essays that are not about personal belief will not be posted on our website. Editorial decisions are at the sole discretion of This I Believe, Inc.

We encourage every writer to proofread his or her essay several times before submitting it, as This I Believe, Inc., does not accept corrections or changes after receiving an essay.

**IMPORTANT:** Please encourage students 18 and older to submit essays to the This I Believe website; however, **we caution the exercise of making essay submission mandatory for a grade.**

**IMPORTANT:** For students under the age of 18, parents or guardians must be involved in the actual submission process online. Please direct parents to our website if they wish to submit their child’s essay to our online Essay Collection.

**IMPORTANT:** This I Believe, Inc., is no longer accepting essays by U.S. mail. All essays should be submitted through the website at [thisibelieve.org](http://thisibelieve.org).

Essay submissions: [www.thisibelieve.org](http://www.thisibelieve.org)

To submit an essay, click on the menu button “write,” then the drop-down window “submit your essay”

**This I Believe Middle School**  
**Grades: 6, 7, 8**  
**States: North Carolina Common Core Standards**  
**Subjects: Language Arts**

**North Carolina Common Core Standards**  
**Language Arts**  
**Grade 6 - Adopted 2010**

<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.RL.</b>	Reading Standards for Literature
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Craft and Structure
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.RL.4.</b>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of a specific word choice on meaning and tone.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.RL.</b>	Reading Standards for Literature
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.RL.10.</b>	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Text Types and Purposes
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.W.3.</b>	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.W.3.a.</b>	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.

		<p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.W.3.b.</b>	<p>Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.</p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.W.3.c.</b>	<p>Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.</p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.W.3.d.</b>	<p>Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to convey experiences and events.</p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.W.3.e.</b>	<p>Provide a conclusion that follows from the narrated experiences or events.</p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p>



		<p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Production and Distribution of Writing
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.W.4.</b>	<p>Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)</p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.W.5.</b>	<p>With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach.</p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Research to Build and Present Knowledge
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.W.9.</b>	Draw evidence from literary or informational texts to support analysis, reflection, and research.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.W.9.a.</b>	<p>Apply grade 6 reading standards to literature (e.g., "Compare and contrast texts in different forms or genres [e.g., stories and poems; historical novels and fantasy stories] in terms of their approaches to similar themes and topics").</p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p>
<b>STRAND /</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.W.</b>	Writing Standards

<b>DOMAIN</b>		
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Range of Writing
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.W.10.</b>	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.SL.</b>	Speaking and Listening Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Comprehension and Collaboration
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.SL.1.</b>	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 6 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.SL.1.a.</b>	Come to discussions prepared, having read or studied required material; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.  <b>Important Moments</b>  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.SL.1.b.</b>	Follow rules for collegial discussions, set specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.  <b>Important Moments</b>  <b>Outlining</b>

		<p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.SL.1.c.</b>	<p>Pose and respond to specific questions with elaboration and detail by making comments that contribute to the topic, text, or issue under discussion.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.SL.1.d.</b>	<p>Review the key ideas expressed and demonstrate understanding of multiple perspectives through reflection and paraphrasing.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.L.</b>	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Conventions of Standard English
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.L.2.</b>	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>6.L.2.a.</b>	Use punctuation (commas, parentheses, dashes) to set off nonrestrictive/parenthetical elements.

		<b>Outlining</b> <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	6.L.2.b.	Spell correctly. <b>Outlining</b> <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	NC.CC.6.L.	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Knowledge of Language
<b>STANDARD</b>	6.L.3.	Use knowledge of language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	6.L.3.a.	Vary sentence patterns for meaning, reader/listener interest, and style. <b>Outlining</b> <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	NC.CC.6.L.	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
<b>STANDARD</b>	6.L.4.	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 6 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	6.L.4.c.	Consult reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech. <b>Important Moments</b> <b>Outlining</b> <b>Putting It All Together</b> <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	6.L.4.d.	Verify the preliminary determination of the

		<p>meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.6.L.</b>	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>6.L.6.</b>	<p>Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.</p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p>

**North Carolina Common Core Standards**

**Language Arts**

**Grade 7 - Adopted 2010**

<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.7.RL.</b>	Reading Standards for Literature
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Craft and Structure
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>7.RL.4.</b>	<p>Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of rhymes and other repetitions of sounds (e.g., alliteration) on a specific verse or stanza of a poem or section of a story or drama.</p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.7.RL.</b>	Reading Standards for Literature
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity

<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>7.RL.10.</b>	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, in the grades 6-8 text complexity band proficiently, with scaffolding as needed at the high end of the range.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.7.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Text Types and Purposes
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>7.W.3.</b>	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.W.3.a.</b>	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.W.3.b.</b>	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, and description, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.W.3.c.</b>	Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence and signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another.  <b>Outlining</b>

		<b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.W.3.d.</b>	Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.W.3.e.</b>	Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.7.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Production and Distribution of Writing
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>7.W.4.</b>	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>7.W.5.</b>	With some guidance and support from peers

		and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.7.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Range of Writing
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>7.W.10.</b>	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.7.SL.</b>	Speaking and Listening Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Comprehension and Collaboration
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>7.SL.1.</b>	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 7 topics, texts, and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.SL.1.a.</b>	Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.  <b>Important Moments</b>  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is</b>



		<b>Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.SL.1.b.</b>	<p>Follow rules for collegial discussions, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.SL.1.c.</b>	<p>Pose questions that elicit elaboration and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant observations and ideas that bring the discussion back on topic as needed.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.SL.1.d.</b>	<p>Acknowledge new information expressed by others and, when warranted, modify their own views.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>STRAND /</b>	<b>NC.CC.7.L.</b>	<b>Language Standards</b>

<b>DOMAIN</b>		
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Conventions of Standard English
<b>STANDARD</b>	7.L.1.	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English grammar and usage when writing or speaking.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	7.L.1.b.	Choose among simple, compound, complex, and compound-complex sentences to signal differing relationships among ideas.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	NC.CC.7.L.	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Conventions of Standard English
<b>STANDARD</b>	7.L.2.	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	7.L.2.b.	Spell correctly.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	NC.CC.7.L.	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Knowledge of Language
<b>STANDARD</b>	7.L.3.	Use Knowledge of Language and its conventions when writing, speaking, reading, or listening.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	7.L.3.a.	Choose language that expresses ideas precisely and concisely, recognizing and eliminating wordiness and redundancy.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	NC.CC.7.L.	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
<b>STANDARD</b>	7.L.4.	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on grade 7 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.

<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.L.4.c.</b>	Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries, thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.  <b>Important Moments</b>  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>7.L.4.d.</b>	Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).  <b>Important Moments</b>  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.7.L.</b>	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>7.L.6.</b>	Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>

**North Carolina Common Core Standards**

**Language Arts**

**Grade 8 - Adopted 2010**

<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.RL.</b>	Reading Standards for Literature
<b>CATEGORY /</b>		Craft and Structure

<b>CLUSTER</b>		
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.RL.4.</b>	Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including figurative and connotative meanings; analyze the impact of specific word choices on meaning and tone, including analogies or allusions to other texts.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.RL.</b>	Reading Standards for Literature
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Range of Reading and Level of Text Complexity
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.RL.10.</b>	By the end of the year, read and comprehend literature, including stories, dramas, and poems, at the high end of grades 6-8 text complexity band independently and proficiently.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Text Types and Purposes
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.W.3.</b>	Write narratives to develop real or imagined experiences or events using effective technique, relevant descriptive details, and well-structured event sequences.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.W.3.a.</b>	Engage and orient the reader by establishing a context and point of view and introducing a narrator and/or characters; organize an event sequence that unfolds naturally and logically.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.W.3.b.</b>	Use narrative techniques, such as dialogue, pacing, description, and reflection, to develop experiences, events, and/or characters.

		<p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.W.3.c.</b>	<p>Use a variety of transition words, phrases, and clauses to convey sequence, signal shifts from one time frame or setting to another, and show the relationships among experiences and events.</p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.W.3.d.</b>	<p>Use precise words and phrases, relevant descriptive details, and sensory language to capture the action and convey experiences and events.</p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.W.3.e.</b>	<p>Provide a conclusion that follows from and reflects on the narrated experiences or events.</p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY /</b>		Production and Distribution of Writing

<b>CLUSTER</b>		
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.W.4.</b>	Produce clear and coherent writing in which the development, organization, and style are appropriate to task, purpose, and audience. (Grade-specific expectations for writing types are defined in standards 1-3 above.)  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.W.5.</b>	With some guidance and support from peers and adults, develop and strengthen writing as needed by planning, revising, editing, rewriting, or trying a new approach, focusing on how well purpose and audience have been addressed.  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.W.</b>	Writing Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Range of Writing
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.W.10.</b>	Write routinely over extended time frames (time for research, reflection, and revision) and shorter time frames (a single sitting or a day or two) for a range of discipline-specific tasks, purposes, and audiences.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.SL.</b>	Speaking and Listening Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Comprehension and Collaboration
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.SL.1.</b>	Engage effectively in a range of collaborative discussions (one-on-one, in groups, and teacher-led) with diverse partners on grade 8 topics, texts,

		and issues, building on others' ideas and expressing their own clearly.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.SL.1.a.</b>	<p>Come to discussions prepared, having read or researched material under study; explicitly draw on that preparation by referring to evidence on the topic, text, or issue to probe and reflect on ideas under discussion.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.SL.1.b.</b>	<p>Follow rules for collegial discussions and decision-making, track progress toward specific goals and deadlines, and define individual roles as needed.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.SL.1.c.</b>	<p>Pose questions that connect the ideas of several speakers and respond to others' questions and comments with relevant evidence, observations, and ideas.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Telling My Story</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is</b></p>

		<b>Important</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.SL.1.d.</b>	Acknowledge new information expressed by others, and, when warranted, qualify or justify their own views in light of the evidence presented.  <b>Important Moments</b>  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>  <b>Telling My Story</b>  <b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.L.</b>	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Conventions of Standard English
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.L.2.</b>	Demonstrate command of the conventions of standard English capitalization, punctuation, and spelling when writing.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.L.2.a.</b>	Use punctuation (comma, ellipsis, dash) to indicate a pause or break.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.L.2.c.</b>	Spell correctly.  <b>Outlining</b>  <b>Putting It All Together</b>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.L.</b>	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.L.4.</b>	Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words or phrases based on grade 8 reading and content, choosing flexibly from a range of strategies.
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.L.4.c.</b>	Consult general and specialized reference materials (e.g., dictionaries, glossaries,



		<p>thesauruses), both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or determine or clarify its precise meaning or its part of speech.</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>EXPECTATION</b>	<b>8.L.4.d.</b>	<p>Verify the preliminary determination of the meaning of a word or phrase (e.g., by checking the inferred meaning in context or in a dictionary).</p> <p><b>Important Moments</b></p> <p><b>Outlining</b></p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p> <p><b>Who Are You? Finding Out What is Important</b></p>
<b>STRAND / DOMAIN</b>	<b>NC.CC.8.L.</b>	Language Standards
<b>CATEGORY / CLUSTER</b>		Vocabulary Acquisition and Use
<b>STANDARD</b>	<b>8.L.6.</b>	<p>Acquire and use accurately grade-appropriate general academic and domain-specific words and phrases; gather vocabulary knowledge when considering a word or phrase important to comprehension or expression.</p> <p><b>Putting It All Together</b></p>