Part II: Stating your credo

*First compose a personal credo that distills your unique*

*approach to life into a short statement of no more that 150 words and turn it in for approval.* You will then be working with this idea to develop your personal narrative essay.

For this exercise to be meaningful, you must make it wholly your own. This

short statement isn’t ALL you believe; it’s simply a way to introduce others to

some things you value. *In spite of the name, your credo need not be religious*

*or even public and in fact cannot state anything that is dogma.*

You may decide to focus on commitments to family, service, political action, or the arts. As you look for a focus, try to choose concrete language and to find something that helps others understand your past, present, and future choices.

As you begin to articulate your own credo, spend some time reflecting on creeds that have shaped political, social, or religious movements you’re interested in. Spend 15–20 minutes researching statements that have galvanized a group of people or shaped a movement. Would you consider the Preamble to the Constitution or the Communist Manifesto as creeds? Do Amnesty International, Greenpeace, or other campus groups use statements of belief to identify themselves? Can creeds be negative as well as positive statements, dividing as well as uniting people?

**Here are a few Credo examples**

***I believe in stories. Stories that live and breathe. Stories that are fruitful and multiply. That create stories within stories. Bring into being stories of my own. I want stories that provoke a powerful response be it tears, laughter, or thought. I desire a story to have a gravity of its own. If it’s not worth telling more than once, it’s not worth telling. It should continue to***

***pull me back again and again . . .***

*\* \* \**

***I believe that music is a force that stands and beckons the souls of humans to step out of their secret places. I have seen the power of a guitar’s voice as it draws out the souls of strangers in a crowd from under their superficiality and holds them spellbound as one. I have felt an overwhelming sense of unity fall over a huge crowd of people when the***

***insightful artist reveals his sorrow, his frustration, or his overwhelming joy with a melody. I believe in closed eyes and dim lighting, in tapping feet, concert halls, and heads carried up and down by the rolling swells of a melody. . .***

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***I believe in the wisdom of the ages. My happiest place was sitting on my grandmother’s counter, while she was cooking, trying to memorize her cornbread recipe. I would sit on her powder blue carpet and run my fingers over the hand stitches of her many old quilts, while the colored glass humming bird feeders on her porch made patches of purple and green***

***move slowly around her living room. Her wisdom slipped by so many, but I drank it in like sunlight. . .***

**Something to think over:**

In an interview on “The Need for Creeds,” Jaroslav Pelikan suggests, “in the darkest hours of life, you’ve got to believe something specific, and that specification is the task of the creed, because, much as some people may not like it, to believe one thing is also to disbelieve another. To say yes is also to say no.”

Part III: WRITING THE ESSAY

***This I Believe Essay Assignment***

For this essay you will write a 300-400 word personal essay describing an idea or

principle you believe in. Like the credo discussion, for this exercise to be meaningful, you must make it wholly your own and may not just reiterate a religious or political belief system or dogma.

As a narrative essay, you may focus on personal experience as examples. You do not need to use research unless you choose to. If you choose to use someone else’s examples for support or language, make sure you give the appropriate recognition and credit by citing.

Your essay should embody one belief. That belief may have a few different governing practices or principles. For good examples of this listen to Sarah Adams or Andrew Sullivan’s essays. For good examples of a single belief with a single practice pay close attention to Elie Wiesel, Phyllis Allen, and Maria Zapetis.