This I Believe
Summer Reading Assignment Directions
Due August 31, 2017

I verify that ___________________________completed her summer reading. Grade:_______
Parent/Guardian Signature

Directions: Please read the essays listed below and then answer ONE of the two questions under the theme headings below. This means under “Humanity” choose ONE of the two questions listed to answer, and so on and so forth. These questions require critical thinking and your answers should be at LEAST one paragraph long. Attach your TYPED answers to this question sheet and bring them into school on Aug 31st. After reading the essays and answering the questions, you are also required to write a “This I Believe” essay to be typed up and turned in with the discussion questions. Directions for writing the essay can be found after the discussion questions.

Assigned Essays:

- **Theme: Humanity**
  - “Be Cool to the Pizza Dude” - pg. 7
  - “The Real Consequences of Justice” - pg. 188
  - “When Ordinary People Achieve Extraordinary Things” - pg. 257
- **Theme: Family**
  - “There is no Job More Important Than Parenting” - pg. 28
  - “Always Go to the Funeral” - pg. 235
  - “The People Who Love You When No One Else Will” - pg. 75
  - “The Power of Love to Transform & Heal” - pg. 144
- **Theme: God & Spirituality**
  - “A Daily Walk Just to Listen” - pg. 43
  - “The Elusive Yet Holy Core” - pg. 46
  - “There is More to Life Than My Life” - pg. 191
  - “Living Life with ‘Grace and Elegant Treeness’” - pg. 135
- **Theme: Interdependence**
  - “A Shared Moment of Trust” - pg. 34
  - “The Power of Presence” - pg. 100
  - “We Are Each Other’s Business” - pg. 178
- **Theme: America**
  - “Why I Close My Restaurant” - pg. 153
  - “The America I Believe In” - pg. 184
  - “The Virtues of a Quiet Hero” - pg. 156
- **Theme: Service & Justice**
  - “A Goal of Service To Humankind” - pg. 65
  - “Getting Angry Can Be a Good Thing” - pg. 168
  - “Free Minds & Hearts at Work” - pg. 197
Answer ONE question under each of the theme headings below. This means you should be answer 6 questions total, one for each theme.

**Humanity**
1. What role does empathy play in each of these essays that leads to a more just treatment of our fellow human beings?
2. How do you think treating one person with humility, empathy, and honor, like the pizza dude or inmate, can grow and transcend into working for a cause that will benefit entire groups of people, like the landmine campaign?

**Family**
3. In the essays, “The Most Important Job in the World is Parenting” and “Always Go to the Funeral”, the authors talk about life lessons handed down to them by their parents for which they are very grateful. What are some life lessons you are grateful your own parents or parent figures have taught you?
4. There is power in loving someone as if they are your own flesh & blood, as if made evident in the essays by Cecile Gilmer and Jackie Lantry. How does familial love, even when extended to someone who is not a blood-relative, impact people’s lives? Why do you think this type of love is so powerful and transformative?

**God & Spirituality**
5. What are some of the spiritual practices the authors of these essays have used to get in touch with God, the divine, or nature? How would you define “spiritual practice”? What are some spiritual practices you have that make you feel more closely connected to God, the divine, other humans, and/or nature?
6. In “The Elusive Yet Holy Core”, the author, through studying science, became more aware of the existence of God and how each human “bears an undying soul”. In the mainstream, it seems as if science and spirituality are always going against each other, but from this story we learn otherwise. Therefore, how can studying science and all other sorts of intellectual endeavors actually support our spiritual journey?

**Interdependence**
7. From this set of essays, we learn that interdependence means trusting others, being present to others, and acting on behalf of others when they need it. Which essay from this set resonated the most with you and why? Why do we need each other to survive and thrive in this world?
8. Has there ever been a time in your life when you had to trust someone you didn’t really know or experienced the gift of someone else’s simple presence or even acted on behalf of someone in need? Please share your own personal story of one of those experiences. Why do you think that story has stuck with you?

**America**
9. In the essays, “Why I Close My Restaurant” and “The America I Believe In” we hear stories about immigrants who came to America before 1950. How did America respond towards these immigrants at that time? Has that response towards immigrants changed over time? If so, why do you think that is?
10. In his essay “The Virtues of the Quiet Hero”, John McCain states, “I have believed that the means to real happiness and the true worth of a person is measured by how faithfully we serve a cause
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Discussion Questions

greater than our self-interest. In America, we celebrate the virtues of the quiet hero - the modest man who does his duty without complaint or expectation of praise; the man who listens closely for the call of his country, and when she calls, he answers without reservation, not for fame or reward, but for love.” Do you believe in serving a cause that is greater than your self-interest? If so, does that cause include serving your country? Why or why not?

Service & Justice

11. How do the principles Anthony Fauci lays out in his essay “A Goal of Service to Humankind” help him achieve his goal? How do you think you can help serve humankind? What are your own principles that guide you in this pursuit?

12. In his essay, Jackie Robinson states, “My fight was against barriers that kept Negroes out of baseball. This was the area where I found imperfection, and where I was best able to fight.” What area of the world do you find imperfection that you think you are best able to fight?

Writing your own “This I Believe” Essay

To finish your summer reading assignment, you will write your own “This I Believe” essay. You will bring this essay into school with your discussion questions on August 31st typed up on a separate piece of paper to turn in. Please stick to the following guidelines while writing your essay:

1. **Tell A Story**: Be specific. Take your belief out of the ether and ground it to the events of your life. Your story need not be heartwarming or gut-wrenching - it can can even be funny - but it should be REAL. Consider moments when your belief was formed, tested, or changed. Make sure your story ties to the essence of your daily life philosophy and to the shaping of your beliefs.

2. **Be BRIEF**: Your statement should be between 350-500 words. The shorter length forces you to focus on the belief that is central to your life.

3. **NAME your Belief**: If you can’t name it in a sentence or two, your essay may not be about belief. Rather than writing a list, consider focusing on ONE core belief.

4. **Be POSITIVE**: Say what you DO believe in, not what you don’t believe. Avoid statements of religious dogma, preaching, or editorializing.

5. **BE PERSONAL**: Make your essay about you; speak in the first person. Try reading 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.

“This I Believe” Essay Contest

We are holding a “This I Believe” essay contest to go along with the summer reading program. If you would like to enter please submit your “This I Believe” essay by August 21st. Essays will be submitted through the Google Form found here: [https://tinyurl.com/ndaessaycontest](https://tinyurl.com/ndaessaycontest)

A winner from each grade will be chosen by the Mission Effectiveness Committee and will be announced and will receive their prize during Summer Reading Day on August 31st. Even if you enter the contest, you still need to bring your typed up “This I Believe” essay to school on August 31st to turn in.