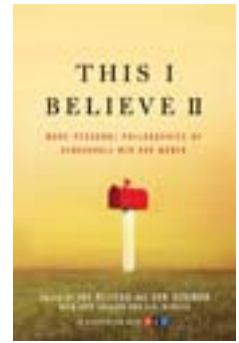




Henry Holt and Company



Discussion Questions for
This I Believe II:
More Personal Philosophies of Remarkable Men and Women
Edited by Jay Allison and Dan Gediman

1. Dramatic events such as Hurricane Katrina and the Iraq War are topics in many of these essays. How, if at all, have recent events shaped your beliefs?
2. Belief in mankind is a common theme among Ernesto Haibi, Roald Hoffmann, and many more. What are some of the recurring threads in these essays? What are their differences? How do these essays stand in light of Yinong Young-Xu's "A Potential for Brutality"? Can these views be reconciled?
3. Tony Hawk, a skateboarder, Yolanda O'Bannon, a secretary, and Dan Tani, an astronaut, write about doing what they love. What does it take to follow one's own path? What sacrifices are required? What would you be doing, if you could?
4. Several of the essays discuss the role music can play in discovering belief, such as Bela Fleck's thoughts on figuring out his own way to do things, Yo-Yo Ma's observations on exploring cultures and traditions, and Joan Tower's view on the power of music. Why do you think music can be such a powerful tool in determining beliefs?
5. Susan Cooke Kittredge writes, "I believe in mending." Do we all need mending? She is starting with her pajamas. Where would you start?
6. Laura Shipler Chico discussed the three qualities she'd like her child to have. What three qualities would you choose for a child? How about for yourself or a mate?
7. Robin Baudier and Andy Blowers turned adversity into what Baudier calls "strange blessings." Is there anything in your own life that could be called a strange blessing?
8. David Buetow believes in his dog. How does looking beyond the human—to animals, things, and places—influence the way we believe or behave?
9. Among the vastly different views on marriage in the world are Corinne Colbert's belief that her husband is "good enough" and Betsy Chalmers's perspective of loyalty to an incarcerated spouse. Are there any universal truths about marriage?
10. This book includes essays from students, as well as essays on growing old. What differences or similarities do you find between these age-specific essays, if any?
11. Do you agree with Sister Helen Prejean, that what we do is what we believe? If so, would you want to change anything you do to better match your beliefs? Do you think that most people would be proud to claim their actions as beliefs?

12. If peace begins with one person, as Ivory Harlow believes, how can each of us contribute? Do any of these essays inspire you to action?
13. What do you believe? What were your greatest influences in shaping those beliefs? How have your beliefs changed throughout your life?
14. Has there been someone in your life who instilled your beliefs in you or inspired you in that way?
15. Is there a time when your core beliefs were shaken or tested, perhaps in ways that were uncomfortable or dangerous?