

English 12 Assignment: Credo



Vaclav Havel, the playwright, political dissident, and former president of the Czech Republic, once stated:

We find ourselves in a paradoxical situation. We enjoy all the achievements of modern civilization that have made our physical existence on this earth easier in so many important ways. Yet we do not know exactly what to do with ourselves, where to turn. The world of our experiences seems chaotic, disconnected, confusing. There appear to be no integrating forces, no unified meaning, and no true inner understanding of phenomena in our experience of the world. Experts can explain anything in the objective world to us, yet we understand our own lives less and less. In short, we live in the postmodern world, where everything is possible, and almost nothing is certain.



Chris McCandless seemed to share Havel's belief that we understand our own lives less and less as we learn more about the world around us, so he chose to strike out on his own to discover his own identity. McCandless was hardly the first person to find such confusion in society that he had to search for his true self. Writers like Thoreau and Nietzsche, Sartre and Kerouac struggled with it in their writing and lives.

Finding out who we are may depend on defining ourselves. The word "credo" comes from the Latin word *credos*, which means "I believe." A credo is a statement of belief, a set of guiding principles that define us.

Your assignment is to write two brief (100-200 word) credos, one defining what Chris McCandless believed about himself and aspired to and one defining your own worldview and aspirations.

- Your assignment can be written in prose or poetry and take any format you like, but because it's such a short piece of writing, your writing should be impeccable with careful attention to grammar and usage. It's a statement of who you are after all. Shouldn't you care enough to make it precise? 😊
- If you want to get creative and include some art (and even reduce the word count a bit), you may.
- Your writing should be in first-person.

For the McCandless section, you may want to revisit these parts of the book: passages he highlighted in books, his letter to Ronald Franz, his journal entries, and his statements in the bus. You may use VERY BRIEF QUOTES from his work, but the writing should be your own for the most part.

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For your own work, you may consider a few models as inspiration.

Thoreau's credo, was A+ work:

We must learn to reawaken and keep ourselves awake, not by mechanical aids, but by an infinite expectation of the dawn, which does not forsake us in our soundest sleep. I know of no more encouraging fact than the unquestionable ability of man to elevate his life by a conscious endeavor.... I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life, and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I had not lived. I did not wish to live what was not life, living is so dear; nor did I wish to practise resignation, unless it was quite necessary. I wanted to live deep and suck out all the marrow of life, to live so sturdily and Spartan-like as to put to rout all that was not life, to cut a broad swath and shave close, to drive life into a corner, and reduce it to its lowest terms, and, if it proved to be mean, why then to get the whole and genuine meanness of it, and publish its meanness to the world; or if it were sublime, to know it by experience, and be able to give a true account of it in my next excursion. For most men, it appears to me, are in a strange uncertainty about it, whether it is of the devil or of God, and have somewhat hastily concluded that it is the chief end of man here to "glorify God and enjoy him forever."

Jack Kerouac had trouble hitting the word count, but gets a A for ideas:

