

This I Believe: Multimodal Remix

Introduction & Context

Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday
	This I Believe Multimodal lesson	Multimodal Layers lesson Project intro: Assignment Sheet & Pitch; examples of video essays	No class Project choice due	Thesis & Research Questions lesson Pitch Due; conferences during class to approve; example of photo essays	

In Exercise 1: This I Believe students were taken through a brief history of the [This I Believe radio show from the 1950s](#) (CBS Radio 1951-1955). In the historical show famous persons were asked to write a statement about what they believe, often in the context of major current events. Students listened to a This I Believe statement from the original show, and then discussed what beliefs are, and then did their own research about major events/issues/topics of their life. After providing this context, students crafted their own statements.

This exercise will now be reimaged as a multimodal activity as a Part II to the original activity. Students will return to their This I Believe written statements and create them as multimodal ‘texts’.

This exercise is meant to instill the meaning of multimodal communication to students. The exercise will open a unit on the multimodal essay, which will culminate in a multimodal project. By engaging with a multimodal creation within the span of a class, students will have experiences, in a smaller way, what they will need to do for their final project. Additionally, the products of this exercise will be hung around the classroom and provide examples of multimodal and multimedia communication as students dive deeper into these styles of expression and exploration.

Previous to this exercise students will have engaged in a lesson on multimedia and multimodal ‘texts’, specifically the video layers exercise I designed in the discussion board for

the asynchronous activity on Wednesday, November 30th where students analyzed the layers of communication (text, image, sound) in a video example.

Summary

Students will be asked to revisit a text they wrote at the beginning of a semester-long course. Their 'This I Believe' statements were used as a get-to-know-you classroom community-building exercise and informed (ideally) their ideas for the first major writing assignment, the personal essay. Now students will use their statements to create a multimodal piece of art in order to understand new modes of communicating using various media. All students will be asked to create a poster or banner or mood board with materials provided in class. This creation in itself is multimodal as the final product will use text, images and colors to communicate meaning; of course the creation is multimedia as well as materials provided will be magazines, colored paper, writing utensils, and glue. After completing their poster, students will consider how to present it to the class in order for students to experience the presentation of multimodal work—and thus adding yet another layer of communication and meaning to their work.

This exercise serves many purposes, most prominently as a short-term example of a 3-week multimodal essay project that will take place after this exercise.

- This exercise provides student-generated examples of beyond-text communication for the multimodal essay project. Students might struggle with these terms and concepts; my most succinct way of communicating what multimodal means is “anything beyond text on a page” to communicate meaning. While this provides a category of understanding for multimodal work, it is expansive, and the possibility of choosing among numerous possibilities might be overwhelming. This exercise takes students through the process of multimodal creation and hopefully will ground their project work ahead.
- Foster a classroom community. By engaging in an exercise of self-identity, what was a group of students, can begin to become a more connected group. Each student will make a statement of their identity, as an individual, but the larger context of the This I Believe Exercise connects each individual through the act of writing, sharing, and crafting value statements in light of current events. ←this was a purpose of the This I Believe exercise and it still works for Part II. By this point students have been in class together for ~13 weeks and a classroom community has been developed. This exercise will cement that community and add to the layers of experiences from previous weeks. There is an element of nostalgia in this exercise which serves the next point. Additionally, hanging the posters up after the exercise will liven up the classroom during what is often a stressful and busy time of the semester for students and teachers alike.

- Queuing up to the retrospective. During the final week of the semester students will engage in a 2-hour retrospective on their English 3 experience. This class will ask students to pick their best piece of writing, reflect on how they have

improved, what challenged them and how they responded. By revisiting an early piece of writing, this exercise is a small sample of what will be done in exactly 3 weeks during the double block.

Objectives

Short-term objectives: understand multimodal and multimedia, specifically, how they connect to meaning-making, and the communication of meaning to an audience.

Long-term objectives: Establish a foundation for brainstorming for their upcoming multimodal essays; a takeaway for their English 3 experience (the poster).

Standards Fulfilled

Essential Skills & Habits

Communication 4: I can create a physical or digital work that communicates complex ideas to an audience when they interact with it.

Communication 5: I can intentionally choose a medium and/or make design choices about aesthetics to enhance the impact of my ideas.

Content-Specific Competencies

Written communication

English 1:b I can organize my ideas in order to achieve cohesion in my writing.

NCTE Standards

4. Students adjust their use of spoken, written, and visual language to communicate effectively with a variety of audiences and for different purposes.

5. Students employ a wide range of strategies as they write and use different writing process elements appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes.

6. Students apply knowledge of language structure, language conventions, media techniques, figurative language, and genre to create, critique, and discuss print and nonprint texts.

12. Students use spoken, written, and visual language to accomplish their own purposes.

Common Core Standards

11-12

SL.5 Make strategic use of digital media in presentations to enhance understanding of findings, reasoning, and evidence and to add interest.

Materials

- Computer / journal, wherever students have their This I Believe statements stored
- Posters (1 for each student, could be $\frac{1}{4}$ of a full poster board per student to save on materials)
- Markers, pens
- Magazines
- Scissors (4)
- Glue sticks (6)
- Colored paper

Agenda

This exercise is designed for a 2-hour block class, though it could be fashioned for a 80- or 90-minute class depending on the respective schedule of the teacher.

Introduction (5 minutes)

Multimodal & Multimedia - brief introduction (8 minutes)

Revisit 'This I Believe' written statements from previous lesson (7 minutes)

Create posters/ banners/ mood board (30 minutes)

(10 minute break / wiggle room for exercise time if needed)

- 1 hour mark-

Instructions for preparing presentation (2 minutes)

Prepare presentation (15 minutes)

Presentations (40 minutes; 5 minutes max per student for presentation and comments)

Wrap up; decorate the classroom! (3 minutes)

Introduction (5 minutes)

- (2 minutes) Take attendance, check-in with students, let them get settled. They are anticipating a new unit since we finished up the multigenre essay (MGE) previously.

(3 minutes) Alright! Welcome to a new unit! Y'all's MGEs were wonderful. How does everyone feel about what they produced?

[Take some feedback from students]

I was really impressed at how many layers of meaning you were able to communicate through the various genre choices and designs. I downloaded some of your essays to use for future examples, if you don't want me to use your essay please stay after class and let me know, or send me an email.

Today we are going to create something to help us understand a key concept for your mini-LASR projects. We're going to use your This I Believe Statements as a foundation. Do y'all remember the This I Believe exercise?

[Wait for responses & ask students to elaborate if they answer only 'yes']

Great! So we are going to use that writing and add layers to it, by finding new ways to communicate what you wrote through a presentation. What you create today will be a small and simplified sample of what you will be doing for the mini-LASR project.

Multimodal & Multimedia brief introduction (8 minutes)

Are most of you familiar with the mini-LASR? If you are, could you share with the class some past mini-LASR projects you've done? What does LASR stand for?

[students share]

Based on these descriptions, the LASR project is what is known as multimodal. Does anyone know what that word means?

[write the word on the board. Wait for responses, if any.]

Okay, well this word has two parts, multi and modal, what does multi mean?

[sample response: many!]

Exactly! Now, what about 'modal'?

[Wait for responses, but when I've introduced this before I've not gotten any]

Modal comes from the word 'mode' which means 'a way or manner in which something is done, expressed or experienced'. In terms of a project like the mini-LASR the way I like to explain it is a 'layer of meaning or communication'. In the absolute simplest terms, especially for what you'll create today, and what you will create for your LASR is 'anything beyond the text on a page—anything different than an essay—that communicate meaning'

[Use examples from students' past LASR projects they shared to describe the layers of communication, in other words, point out the different modes, though I have found that the word 'layers' sticks better with students than modes.]

For the mini-LASR in this class you will be writing a multimodal essay. We will talk more about that tomorrow when I share the Assignment Sheet with you. It's posted on the class Bulletin Board if you want to take a look tonight. For right now let's focus on what multimodal means in terms of what you will create today using your This I Believe statement.

So if multimodal writing is 'anything beyond text on the page' what are ways that we communicate that are not text on a page? You can use examples from your multigenre essay if

you'd like—what beyond text did you use to communicate meaning?

[Wait for responses, which usually come slowly at first but will pick up speed once they hear things like 'images' and 'video' and 'drawings'. Write the words on the board]

Okay, yes, great ideas, I'm going to add some: collage, body language—remember the video Ted Talk we watched about the 3 ways to speak English by Jamila Lysicott? We talked about her gestures, body language and movement in that video as a part of her communication. What about color?

[point to materials on the table]

If something is written in red versus green, does that communicate something differently?

[Hopefully someone will make the observation that red text usually says certain things while green text says something different]

So that is an example of two modes of communicating working together, like a Stop sign.

We see different ways of communicating. Now I want to introduce a related word: multimedia.

Does anyone know what this means?

[usually someone can infer and says "many media"]

Yes! Multi, again, means 'many' and 'media' actually is the plural of 'medium'. Does anyone know what 'medium' means?

[wait for responses, if any]

Medium is a tool or material used for some kind of production, or creation. So, like paint, or charcoal pencils, or textiles, or *[points to materials and wait until someone says 'paper!']*

Today you are going to use this media to create a visual representation of your This I Believe statement and present it to the class as a multimodal piece. You will first use these materials, or media, to design a poster, and then you will decide how you want to present it to the class, what mode you would like to use to share.

Let's get familiar with our writing from weeks ago, and then we'll return to the specific instructions.

Revisit 'This I Believe' written statements from previous lesson (7 minutes)

Take out your reading journal and find the pages where you wrote your This I Believe Statement. If you changed it significantly from your handwritten version, you can find the more recent draft on your computer if you'd like. What do you all remember about this writing exercise?

[Listen to responses from students: make sure they include details about the original radio show, and the historical context they were asked to consider]

Take a few minutes to re-read your piece silently.

[Allow for 3-4 minutes to read]

Does anything strike you about your piece? Something you like, or had forgotten and enjoyed reading again? Anyone want to change theirs?

[Listen to student responses, which are mostly to get them thinking about their writing rather than provide a specific answer]

Create posters/ banners/ mood board (30 minutes)

Today you will create a visual representation of your writing with the materials in front of you. This can be a collage, you can write on the poster in different colors, you can cut shapes, or images from a magazine that represent your writing. Whatever expresses your writing in a multimedia way that feels right to you. You'll have 30 minutes, then we'll take a break. When we come back we will talk about ways to present your creation to the class in a way that makes it a multimodal piece of writing.

[Students work on their posters for the remainder of the time until break]

10-minute break - 1 hour mark - or wiggle room with the exercise if needed

Instructions for preparing presentation (2 minutes)

Welcome back! Your posters look amazing!

So these are multimedia, you used paper, glue, pencil, pen and marker to make something. These are also multimodal, they are communicating your written piece in different layers; your written piece now has new layers, or modes of communicating the same information. Perhaps you feel you've achieved an entirely new layer of meaning with your visual, multimedia elements.

Just like your upcoming mini-LASR multimodal essay, you will present your creation. This presentation will bring together your written This I Believe Statements and the visual poster. You've got 3 choices: (1) You can stand up and talk about your poster and you must use words from your statement, (2) you can take pictures of parts of the poster and create a slideshow that you narrate, or you can incorporate those images into the This I Believe Text (3) or you can make a short video of you narrating an explanation of your poster using your writing, or perhaps filming your poster in various settings while you read your writing as audio over the visual.

Keep these short, about 3-4 minutes. You have 15 minutes to prep these so keep it simple! Email me your files, or share them with me so we can use my computer to present when it is your turn.

Prepare presentation (15 minutes)

Students may leave the classroom to film

Presentations (40 minutes; 5 minutes max per student for presentation and comments)

Ask students to volunteer to present. After the presentation ask for reactions and comments from students and ask quick questions:

What layers do you (the audience) notice?

What layers of meaning are you communicating through your design of your poster, and through your presentation content?

Wrap up; decorate the classroom! (3 minutes)

I'm really glad that we got to revisit the This I Believe statements. You all have some wonderful ideas, beliefs and values. These posters are so beautiful as well. Let's take a minute and hang them up on the classroom walls! We'll have them to look at during the final weeks of this class.

I did not prepare a poster for this exercise, but I have done a bit of multimodal communication below by emphasizing certain words, using colored text, and incorporating images.

below

I believe that we have been given the greatest gift: a self-sustaining planet that runs on renewable systems. *Humans need nothing more than what grows, decomposes, fertilizes and flourishes around us.*

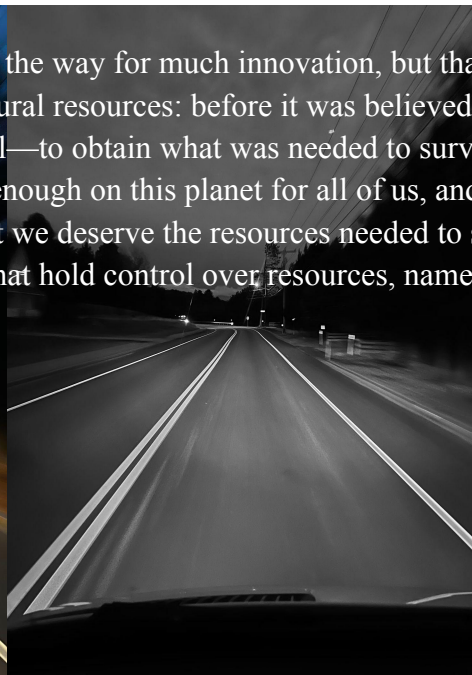
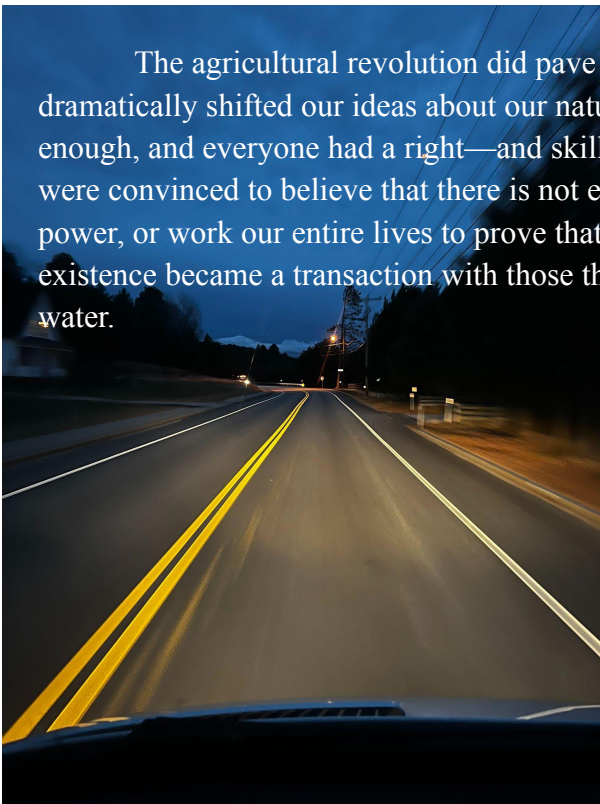
Taken on the Appalachian Trail Spring 2018 >



We knew this at one point in our history; this knowledge lives in the **language, practices and rituals of indigenous groups**.

We lost this knowledge, and at that point we began to test the limits of what we have been given. I believe that since the agricultural revolution humanity has been walking a **self-destructive path** fueled by an insatiable desire manufactured by capitalism.

The agricultural revolution did pave the way for much innovation, but that revolution dramatically shifted our ideas about our natural resources: before it was believed that there was enough, and everyone had a right—and skill—to obtain what was needed to survive, after, we were convinced to believe that there is not enough on this planet for all of us, and we must exert power, or work our entire lives to prove that we deserve the resources needed to survive. Our existence became a transaction with those that hold control over resources, namely food and water.



Taken on a road in the White Mountains driving towards Mt. Washington

I believe that hope exists in a return to the knowledge that we once revered.
I believe that this knowledge exists within us, it is a part of our being, so that it
will never be lost.