

A Crow's Theatre Production

I, CLAUDIA



Original Study Guide Created by Matt & Keri Sedmen, CBE (educational portions)
and Amy-Lynn Strilchuck & Anna Lake

Adapted Study Guide for Geordie Productions by Jessica Abdallah

Table of Contents

Introduction to the Study Guide	3
<i>I, Claudia</i> Cast and Production Crew	5
The Geordie Staff	5
UNIT 1: Meet <i>I, Claudia</i>	
About <i>I, Claudia</i>	6
About the Playwright	6
Play Synopsis	7
UNIT 2: Pre-Show Activities	
Topics and Themes Found in <i>I, Claudia</i>	10
Theme Activities	12
Vocabulary in <i>I, Claudia</i>	16
Discussion: Theatre Rules and Etiquette	17
UNIT 3: Post-Show Activities	
Play Discussion	19
Theatre Related Activities	21
Responding Activities	23
Writing Activities	25
Appendix	
Appendix A: Character Analysis Sheet	27
Appendix B: The Credo Process	28

Introduction to the Study Guide

The educator's guide for *I, Claudia* has been divided into 3 units.

- Meet *I, Claudia*
- Pre-Show Activities
- Post-Show Activities

Each unit has various lesson plans and activities. Each lesson and activity can be used as a stand alone and therefore you do not need to follow them in sequential order. Please choose the activities that would be of interest to your students.

If you have any feedback or comments please contact Geordie Productions' Education & Outreach Manager, Jessica Abdallah at schools@geordie.ca.

Thank you and we hope you enjoy the play and the guide.



Meet... *I, Claudia*



I, CLAUDIA CAST AND PRODUCTION CREW

WRITTEN BY Kristen Thompson
DIRECTED BY Chris Abraham
STARRING Michelle Polak
SET & COSTUMES BY Julie Fox
LIGHTING BY Beth Kates
SOUND BY Chris Abraham
STAGE MANAGEMENT BY Sarah O'Brien

THE GEORDIE STAFF

ARTISTIC DIRECTOR – Dean Patrick Fleming
GENERAL MANAGER – Lyndee Hansen
SCHOOL LIAISON – Jessica Abdallah
ADMINISTRATIVE ASSISTANT – Katharine Childs
RESIDENT TECHNICIAN – James Douglas
PRODUCTION MANAGER – Diana Daly
BOOK KEEPER – Steve Lafrenière
FOUNDING ARTISTIC DIRECTOR – Elsa Bolam

Check out our website! www.geordie.ca

About *I, Claudia*

I, Claudia was developed and first produced by Tarragon Theatre (Toronto) in April 2001. The original production had three successful runs at Tarragon Theatre, was presented at Harbourfront Centre as part of World Stage, and toured to Belfry Theatre (Vancouver), Magnetic North (Edmonton) and Hungary.

I, Claudia has won numerous awards including a Dora Mavor Moore Award for BEST NEW PLAY in 2001 and a Sterling Award for BEST PERFORMANCE (Liisa Repo-Martell) in 2008.

In 2004, *I, Claudia* was adapted into a film which was shown on CBC's Opening Night and at the Toronto International Film Festival. In the film, and in the original theatre production of *I, Claudia*, Thomson portrayed all the characters with the help of four different masks.



About the Playwright

As playwright and performer, Kristen Thomson has had considerable success with *I, Claudia*, her first play. She developed the play over the course of two years, improvising with masks designed by Abdelkader Farah.

I, Claudia was later adapted to film by Kristen and director Chris Abraham. For the film, Kristen was awarded a best performance Gemini and ACTRA Award, along with two Canadian Comedy Awards for performance and writing. She is a resident of Toronto where she continues to act in theatre and film, most recently the Oscar nominated feature *Away From Her*. Kristen continues her long-standing relationship with the Tarragon Theatre, as a playwright in residence. *The Patient Hour*, Kristen's second play, received its premiere at the Tarragon Theatre in early 2009.

Play Synopsis

written by Amy Lynn Strilchuk, Alberta Theatre Projects



You're about to meet one extraordinary adolescent. Claudia is on the cusp of some big changes in life: puberty, turning thirteen and dealing with her parents' divorce. But without any real friends at school, Claudia has no one to commiserate with.

And so, here we are, in the school's boiler room, to listen to Claudia's unique point of view on the world. To tell Claudia's story, performer Michelle Polak dons a few dramatic masks (including the character of Claudia) to portray some significant people in Claudia's life: Leslie (her dad's fiancée), Drachman (the school janitor) and Douglas (her grandfather). By doing so, we hear Claudia's side of the story and see how those figures factor into the equation.

The math of the matter goes something like this: Claudia has a science project due that she can't complete properly because her "friends" bailed on her, so she's turned her goldfish into her new focus for scientific observation. Divide the week by seven (giving Claudia only Monday nights to spend with her dad), add in one stepmom-to-be who will be subtracting Claudia's dad from her life and factor in her grandfather's sadness over the death of his wife. Multiply these elements by the intense emotions brewing within Claudia and you have one exceptional girl with a lot on her mind!

But while Claudia may be incredibly observant of the people around her, what she doesn't know is that there is an equally unique loner who's looking out for her. As Claudia's most captivated audience member, he learns an important lesson by watching her: that we only discover our true selves when we reflect on our own sorrows.

One of the most unforgettable personal journeys you will ever take with a character, *I, Claudia* reveals the raw, expressive way in which one girl works to formulate her identity while facing some big changes in her life. Never once are you allowed to sit back, passively, and observe the details of **Claudia's days**. Playwright Kristen Thomson has made masks an integral part of the storytelling so that audiences are exposed to fresh perspectives at every turn and engaged in the complicated characters **who are a part of Claudia's complex life**. Michelle Polack is an extraordinary example of how one actor can create a myriad of voices in a single show; a renowned, one-of-a-kind performance that must not be missed! With its spirited characters, spectacular storytelling and stunning one-woman performance, *I, Claudia* has captured the hearts of everyone it touches. We hope you'll join us for the opportunity to connect with this exceptional, theatrical tour-de-force!



Audience Advisories for Students

Some instances of swearing ("shit", "fuck", "Jesus Christ"), discussions of sexuality, drugs and other mature themes



Pre-Show Activities



Topics and Themes Found in *I, Claudia*

Overall Objectives

To discuss play themes
To practice communication skills
To expand creative thinking skills
To enhance presentation skills
To enhance research and writing skills

Discuss the following topics/themes with your students in relation to their experiences at school and with their peers. (N.B. Include any additional topics/themes your students have brought up during any play discussions you have.):

- Transformation
- Reflection, Image, Identity
- Decision Making
- Voice
- Literary Devices

TRANSFORMATION

- 1) Performer transforming with masks
- 2) Character transformation
- 3) Changes in life
 - a. Divorce
 - b. Adolescence/Puberty
 - c. Aging
 - d. Marriage
 - e. Emigration/Immigration
 - f. Career
 - g. Death of loved one



REFLECTION, IMAGE, IDENTITY

1) Outer reflection:

- a. How we perceive ourselves and how others perceive us
- b. Image vs. reality
- c. Mirrors (as set piece and as metaphor operating in the play)
 - i. How people around us reflect who we are (friends, family, etc.)
- d. What we choose to reveal of "self" to others**

2) Self reflection:

- a. Turning inward to investigate our actions and experiences
- b. Play as self-reflection for Claudia

DECISION MAKING

- 1) Decisions that the members of Claudia's family have made and how they impact each other
- 2) Decisions Claudia has had to make

VOICE

- 1) Performer's voice: how it changes to portray character(s)
- 2) Character's voice: Claudia's perspective on her world vs. other characters' perspective on the world.
- 3) Writer's voice: writers being storytellers to give us a new perspective on the world, as they see it.
- 4) Personal voice: how we change our voice depending on who we're with (teachers, friends, etc.)

LITERARY DEVICES

- 1) Similes/Metaphors
- 2) Analogies
- 3) Poetry



Theme Activities

Transformation: Become a Relative

QEP Competencies

Cross-Curricular

Uses creativity

Uses information

Adopts effective work methods

Languages

Uses language to communicate and learn

Arts Education

Creates dramatic works

Ancestor Project

Have students choose a relative who they have not met – preferably 3 generations away such as a great-grandmother or great-great uncle.

Students will then research their relative fully via published material (if any) and first-hand stories from other family members. Investigate all aspects of their life. Did they fight in any wars? Did they have any big accomplishments or make any big discoveries? Were they married and what was it like? Did they have kids? Pets? How did they talk and move? Did they have any favourite hobbies? Food? Places? Where did they live and why? When and how did they die?

Students will then creatively present their ancestor to the class.

Extension Activity:

Using the information gathered about their relative, students will now choose one life-changing **moment in that relative's life**:

- Divorce
- adolescence/puberty
- aging
- marriage
- emigration/immigration
- career
- death of a loved one

Create a fictional story **about their relative's** life-changing moment. Encourage students to use their imaginations when writing these stories and to not feel obligated to follow the facts too carefully. Think of the information they have gathered thus far as a jumping off point to their story.

Outer & Self Reflection Activity

QEP Competencies

Cross-Curricular

Uses creativity
Adopts effective work methods
Achieves his/her potential
Communicates appropriately

Personal Development

Constructs a moral frame of reference

Arts Education

Creates personal images

Languages

Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes

Encourage students to explore their Outer Reflection and their Self Reflection by journaling with the **'Reflection, Image, Identity'** questions on pg. 10 of the study guide as a guideline. After some time has been given to journaling students will then creating their own Self Box. Have students take their Self Boxes home and work on them over the semester.

What you will need:

- Shoe boxes
- Pencils
- Scissors
- A variety of art supplies (Paint, markers, glue, old magazines, glitter, yarn, tissue paper, etc.)

How to make a Self Box:

1. Student will bring in a box of their choice which will be the base for their Self Box. Boxes need to have lids.
2. Students will work individually to create their Self Box. Have students decorate and fill the inside of their box with aspects of their inner self (the stuff they might keep hidden or to themselves). Have students decorate the outside of their box with aspects of their outside self (the stuff they share with others, as well as how others perceive them). Students can use whatever art supplies they choose to create their Self Box. Be Creative!
3. Have students bring in their finished Self Box and present the aspects they feel confident sharing to the rest of the class.
4. Have students hand in a final paper on what they discovered about themselves during the process of creating a Self Box.

Decision Making: What Would You Have Done?

QEP Competencies

Cross-Curricular

Uses information

Exercises critical judgement

Solves problems

Uses creativity

Achieves his/her potential

Personal Development

Takes a reflective position on ethical issues

Languages

Uses language/talk to communicate and to learn

Have students choose a situation in their life where an important decision had to be made either by their family or by themselves. Map out all the positive and negative outcomes that occurred because of that decision. Now, if the decision was made by someone else, ask the student – what decision would you have made in that same situation? Then have students map out all the possible positive and negative outcomes to their decision. If the original decision was made by the student, ask them – what other decision could have been made in that situation? Then have students map out all the possible positive and negative outcomes to their new decision. Compare the two maps. **Which decision was the 'right decision'? Was there a clear right choice?**

Use Your Voice

QEP Competencies

Cross-Curricular

Uses information

Exercises critical judgement

Communicates appropriately

Languages

Uses language/talk to communicate and learn

Personal Development

Takes a reflective position on ethical issues

Have students choose a topic that they are passionate about and that they feel they have a new perspective concerning, it could be anything from how to solve world hunger to how to make the cafeteria food better. Students will then write out their perspective and present it to the class. This activity can vary in scope depending on how long students are given to think about their perspective – from a quick train-of-thought rant to a well research presentation.

The goal is to have students pick a topic, take a stance on it, and present it to their peers with conviction.

Literary Devices: Poetry

QEP Competencies

Cross-Curricular

Uses creativity

Communicates appropriately

Languages

Uses language/talk to communicate and learn

Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes

Have students write a poem about their experience in high school. Students must use at least one other literary device found in *I, Claudia* (similes, metaphors, or analogies) in their poem.



Vocabulary in *I, Claudia*

Below is a list of words that may be helpful to define for students:

Armageddon –noun

1. the place where the final battle will be fought between the forces of good and evil (probably so called in reference to the battlefield of Megiddo. Rev. 16:16).
2. the last and completely destructive battle: The arms race can lead to Armageddon.
3. any great and crucial conflict.

Cameo–noun, plural cam-e-os

1. a technique of engraving upon a gem or other stone in such a way that an underlying stone of one colour is exposed as a background for a low-relief design of another colour.

Dramaturge (also, Dramaturg) –noun

1. a specialist in dramaturgy, esp. one who acts as a consultant to a theatre company, advising them on possible repertory.

Euphemism–noun

1. the substitution of a mild, indirect, or vague expression for one thought to be offensive, harsh, or blunt.

Incarcerated–verb (used with object)

1. to enclose; constrict closely.

Osteoporosis–noun Pathology.

1. a disorder in which the bones become increasingly porous, brittle, and subject to fracture, owing to loss of calcium and other mineral components, sometimes resulting in pain, decreased height, and skeletal deformities: common in older persons, primarily postmenopausal women, but also associated with long-term steroid therapy and certain endocrine disorders.

Precocious–adjective

1. unusually advanced or mature in development, esp. mental development.

Subversive–adjective

1. tending to subvert or advocating subversion, esp. in an attempt to overthrow or cause the destruction of an established or legally constituted government.

From (<http://dictionary.reference.com>)

Geordie Productions Theatre Rules and Etiquette

Objectives: To discuss theatre etiquette
To discuss behavior during a live cultural event

Before attending the *I, Claudia* performance, please discuss theatre etiquette with your students.

Some topics to discuss:

- Have they ever attended any live cultural events outside of school? Please name them?
- How often do they attend cultural events (including concerts, museums, etc)?
- What did they like and dislike about them?
- **Have they ever been annoyed by someone's behavior at one of these events? What was the behavior? Did they do anything about it?**
- How do we show our respect during a performance? (No talking or text messaging during the performance, clapping and laughing when appropriate, etc.)
- Please remind them to stay seated during the performance, and if it is absolutely necessary to get up, to do so in a quiet and respectful manner.

Please discuss the following Geordie Productions Theatre Rules prior to attending the performance of *I, Claudia*.

- Because of union rules and safety issues, NO CAMERAS, CELL PHONES, VIDEO CAMERAS, or other RECORDING DEVICES are permitted during the performance.
- NO FOOD OR DRINK is allowed during the performance.
- Please have your students REMAIN SEATED throughout the performance. If you must take students out of the theatre, please do so quickly and quietly so as not to disturb those around you.



Post-Show Activities

Play Discussion

Objectives

To enhance analytical skills
To develop critical thinking skills
To expand one's world view
To practice creative writing skills

Core Competencies

Cross-Curricular

Uses information
Exercises critical judgment
Uses creativity
Cooperates with others

Languages

Uses language to communicate and learn
Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes

Encourage students to analyze their understanding of, and reactions to, *I, Claudia* by completing one of the following theatre reviews:

- A) Play & Character Analysis
- B) Play Review

Play & Character Analysis

Let students become the actor! The first part of an actor's job is to analyze the play, therefore have students create their own analysis of *I, Claudia*. This analysis can be either a written assignment or an oral presentation.

Have students answer the following questions in full and complete sentences. Encourage them to not give general statements but to support their opinions with specific examples from what they saw.

1. Name of the play, the playwright, publisher, date it was published.
2. A complete list of characters with a brief description of each.
3. Describe the setting of the play (including time period).
4. **Describe the "mood", genre and 1-2 main themes of the play.**
5. Summarize the plot of the play (beginning, exposition, main conflict, rising action, climax, falling action, resolution, conclusion).
6. Explain why you liked or disliked the play. Support your reason and give five examples.
7. Pick your favourite main character and give a complete character analysis of the character, based on the Character Analysis Sheet (Appendix A).
8. There are hints in the play that help an actor work on their characterization of the role they are playing. Give at least two examples of each of the following for your chosen character:
 - a. Things the character says about himself/herself.
 - b. Things others say about the character.

Play Review

Let students be the theatre critic by having them create their own review of *I, Claudia*. This review can be either a written assignment or an oral presentation.

Have students answer the following questions in full and complete sentences. Encourage them to not **give general statements such as, "I liked it", or "It was good"**. These comments are not significant in a review unless specific examples are provided of what you saw to support your opinions.

1. Name of the play, the playwright, director, theatre company, date attended, place, time of performance and the running time.
2. **A brief description of the play's plot.**
3. A character description of the main characters in the play. Do not copy them out of the program or study guide. Use your own words to describe them. Do not describe the actor.
4. Characters
 - a. Your personal opinion of the performance by the actor related to their portrayal of the characters. Remember to give specific examples from the production to support your opinion. Example: note physicality, vocal choices, connecting/chemistry with other actors, etc.
 - b. Choose which character was the most believable and justify your opinion.
 - c. **Choose which character you didn't find believable and justify your opinion.**
5. A discussion of the technical aspects of the play (set, costumes, sound, lighting, special effects). Describe each and give your opinion of how they worked for or against the play:
6. A discussion on the direction of the play and the choices the director made. Remember to justify your opinion with examples. Some things you could discuss in these paragraphs include:
 - a. The staging of the production including blocking, movement, body position, etc.
 - b. Casting
 - c. Development of the characters with the actor
 - d. Set design/ground plan
 - e. Mood created through technical elements
 - f. Timing and pacing of the play
 - g. Overall look and feel of the show
7. In summation, include a final general statement about the play you attended, including what **audience you would recommend it to most, or maybe an audience you wouldn't** (eg. this is a great show for teens, but young children may not grasp the themes).

Theatre-Related Activities

Objectives

- To work well in a group
- To enhance presentation skills
- To think outside of the box
- To engage the imagination
- To exercise non-verbal communication

QEP Competencies

Cross-Curricular

- Uses creativity
- Cooperates with others
- Adopts effective work methods

Languages

- Represents her/his literacy in different media
- Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes

Arts Education

- Creates, performs, and analyses dramatic works
- Creates personal images

I, Claudia has been touring for over 10 years across Canada and has proven to be a Canadian classic, winning various awards including a Dora Award in 2001 for Best New Play and a Sterling Award for Best Performance. The play brilliantly used several aspects of theatre, including masks, gesture, characterization, and storytelling (the act of writing and telling a story).

Here are some activities to encourage students to explore these various aspects of theatre.

Masks in Theatre

Create a mask-making assignment where students make a mask to represent themselves and then write a short monologue about their feelings or thoughts on one of the themes related in *I, Claudia*.

Playwriting

Have students write a credo (look at Appendix B for a description and an explanation on how to create a credo). The credo will then become a jumping-off point for a spontaneous improv, a planned improv, or for writing a short play.

Movement

When using masks, movement and gesture become very important, as facial features are hidden. Have students re-create a section from *I, Claudia* using movement as their only communication tool. It is sometimes helpful when doing movement work to have students wear white face makeup, or an inexpensive white or black mask, or the full-head black masks that are used for black-light theatre and often available inexpensively at stores that sell Halloween costumes. This will help students remember the importance of gesture in their movement pieces.

Warm-up

Entrances and Exits: Have students briefly journal about the characteristic attributes of three people in their own lives. Do they slouch? Do they smile a lot? Are they confident or shy? Do they have a sore hip or leg? Do they shuffle? Do they tend to look down or up? Then have them do entrances and exits on stage in character. Have other students watch for the changes. This can also be done with stereotypical characters, or famous people and the rest of the class can try to guess who is being portrayed. This warm-up tends to turn into a full lesson with higher level students.

Speech

At the end of *I, Claudia* the message of the play is retold through a folk tale. Discuss some other folk tales that students know. In groups of two or three have them choose a folk tale or urban legend and re-enact it.

Responding Activities

Objectives

To enhance analytical skills
To develop critical thinking skills
To expand one's world view
To gain self-awareness
To practice **expressing one's feelings**
and opinions

QEP Competencies

Cross-Curricular

Use information
Achieve his/her potential

Languages

Uses language/talk to communicate and learn
Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes

Personal Development

Constructs a moral frame of reference
Engages in moral dialogue

These activities encourage students to find their own personal beliefs, or stance, through the use of critical analysis and self-reflection. They are offered as general ideas for discussions, writing activities and group activities.

1) Ask your students to discuss or communicate their thoughts and feelings about their relationships with peers, parents and teachers. This assignment may be done as a writing assignment or other communicating methods may be used.

2) What makes a person a friend? Do people in your life do to show that they are a friend or not? Who do you connect with? Do the people in your life need to do to earn or lose your friendship?

3) How do you know when you can trust someone? How do you let people know that they can trust you? Do you have any examples of times in your life when you thought you trusted someone when you shouldn't have?

4) Ask students to create personal mind-maps with one of the key themes outlined at the centre. How do their lives revolve around these themes?

5) There is often a great deal of difference between how we feel we are being perceived and how others actually perceive us. Students can get together in groups to find out these differences and depending on the class dynamic, present them. A good place to start might be with the general population's perception of teens in general, their portrayal in the media, and what students feel is "real".



Writing Activities

Objectives

To enhance analytical skills
To develop critical thinking skills
To expand one's world view
To foster creative writing skills
To develop essay writing skills
To express thoughts, feelings and hopes

QEP Competencies

Cross-Curricular

Uses information
Exercises critical judgement
Uses creativity

Languages

Uses language/talk to communicate and learn
Writes a variety of genres for personal and social purposes

Personal Development

Takes a reflective position on ethical issues

These activities encourage students to organize their thoughts to engage in a variety of writing exercises. They are offered as general ideas for discussions, writing activities and group activities.

1) Many research and essay assignments could use this play as a starter. Students could create a research paper or essay (personal, narrative, argumentative, descriptive, critical, etc.) addressing anything from relationships, death, parents, school, or change (see themes on page 9 of the study guide).

2) Many of the characters in this play have many different loyalties. What are the different loyalties that you have in your life? Explain your answer.

3) Write a letter to/from one of the characters in the play. Express thoughts, feelings, and hopes.

4) Write a diary entry from one of the characters explaining how they feel about a particular incident that was not depicted in the play. For example, Leslie could write about her experience from her point of view on the wedding day.

5) Compare/contrast the character of Claudia (or others) with other characters they have come across in previous studies. In what ways do they remind you of certain stereotypical or stock characters? What ways are they realistic characters? What other characters does each remind them of?



APPENDIX A: Character Analysis Sheet

Fill in each element on the Character Analysis Sheet. Not every element will be answered in the play, therefore have students use to their imaginations to fill in the blanks.

Physical Characteristics – EXTERNAL

Age

Height

Weight

Hair & Eyes

Nationality

Posture

Movement & Gestures

Physical Health

Mannerisms & Quirks

Voice

Dress & Appearance

Environmental Characteristics – EXTERNAL

Family

Occupation

Birthplace

Relationships with people

Home environment

Educational background

Emotional Characteristics – INTERNAL

Intelligence

Ideals

Religion

Attitude towards life & others

Tastes (likes/dislikes)

Confidence

Social life

Temperament

Personality

What angers her/him?

What makes the character happy?

Fears and irritation

APPENDIX B: The Credo Process

Selected excerpts from the book "Writing, Producing and Selling your Play: The Complete Guide for the Beginning and Advanced Playwright" by Louise E. Catron

What is a Credo?

A credo is a personal statement of convictions. It is **the writer's beliefs concerning topics he or she feels are highly important**. It focuses on those parts of life that concern the writer most. It addresses topics which the author has a deep emotional attachment – a burning anger or a strong affection. It is 'This I believe...' It is **unique** to each person.

What are the topics?

- A credo can touch any number of areas. Often writers look at topics that affect their future such as peace, justice, war, and disarmament. Or even more personal concepts of the future such as choices, professions, marriage, and materialism.
- A credo often reflects **the individual's environment**.
- For example,
 - o A **mother's credo** could focus on family structure, discipline within the family, **love, freedom to balance career and family, and women's rights**.
 - o A **student's credo** might look at drugs, friendships, studies, pressure, finding goals, sex, cheating, and the nature of pressure.
- Reflections of surroundings are expected. **The more the credo touches the individual's actual life, the more likely it will deal with areas the writer believes are significant.**

Why write a Credo?

- It gives the writer direction, a compass for a long ocean voyage.
- It encourages personal growth.
- It gives meaning and a reason.
- It can help to sustain the writer when their writing process becomes difficult.

The Credo Process:

Here is one example of how to create a credo. This process is only a suggestion and can be modified **to suit one's own personal needs**. To encourage deep reflection, students should be given adequate time for each step of the process. For example, Step 2 could take place

over a couple of days where students are encouraged to revisit their list once in a while to see if anything new comes to them.

Step One

Discuss with students what a credo is, what topics it can cover and why it is an important step for writers.

Step Two

Have students write a list of at least 10 credos. In this step:

- These first 10 should all start **with "This I believe..."** and should be about a sentence long.
- It is important that the students not censor themselves as they will not be expected to share these 10 with anyone else. Be honest.
- Write whatever comes to their mind as something they believe in even if they seem contradictory.
- Encourage students to be specific with each credo they add to their list so that it **reflects their individual belief about a topic. For example, "This I believe... friendships are good" is very generic, but "This I believe... friendships are good because they allow me to see myself through another person's eyes" is more specific to the student's individual belief about friendship. Or, "This I believe... divorce is hard" is also generic, but "This I believe... divorce is hard because I have to divide my time between my parents" is more specific.**
- 10 is the minimum for this step but students may write more if they choose.

Step Three

Have students choose 3 credos from their list which they feel are most important to them and that they would like to expand on. In this step:

- Students will now write at least a full paragraph for each of the 3 credos they have chosen to expand on.
- Students should take the time to elaborate on each credo. What did they mean when they wrote that credo? What does that credo entail? What examples can you give to support your credo? **And so on. Again... DON'T CENSOR, JUST WRITE.**
- Students should not focus on the structure/grammar/spelling as it is more important for them to get their ideas and beliefs on paper.

Step Four

Have students choose 1 of the credos from step 3 that they would like to expand on. In this step:

- Students must write at least 1 full page about this credo.
- Do not censor on the page. If students are to share their final credo with others, they can always censor what they choose to say.
- Contractions are okay. As students write more in depth about their given topic, they might encounter contradictions or changes in what they previously thought they believed in. These contradictions and changes are great as they encourage the student to clarify what they mean. **For example, for the credo "This I believe... divorce is hard because I have to divide my time between my parents" could also include beliefs that, although divorce is hard at times, it has made my parents happier.**
- Keep in mind that a credo reflects who we are and what we believe in, and that these beliefs will change as we change. Therefore, a credo can change from year to year or even from day to day.

At the end of these steps, students will be left with a credo that they can now use for a variety of exercises such as a spontaneous improve, a planned improve, writing a play or story, and so on.