

Edward Morgan Forster

Audio Guide transcript of National Sound Archive recording

Although EM Forster is best known for such novels as 'A Passage to India', 'Room with a view' and 'Howard's End', he was also known as a social and literary critic. Here he is reading part of his essay entitled 'What I Believe' which he wrote in 1939.

'I do not believe in belief but this is an age of faith and there are so many militant creeds that in self defence, one has to formulate a creed of one's own. Tolerance, good temper and sympathy are no longer enough in a world which is rent by the religious and racial persecution, in a world where ignorance rules and science, who ought to have ruled, plays a subservient pimp.

Tolerance, good temper and sympathy – they are what matter really, and if the human race is not to collapse they must come to the front before long. But for the moment they are not enough. Faith to my mind is a stiffening process – a sort of mental starch which ought to be applied as sparingly as possible.'