



## My Koestler Story: Donna

### Mentoring Has Helped Me Write Some Of My Best Work Yet

When I discovered I was lucky enough to be given a Koestler Arts mentor, I was overjoyed. It was, in my mind, the first step towards a new life and I was so nervous.

I had no formal education and was terrified of looking like an idiot who could write poetry but had absolutely no understanding or appreciation for other poets.

It was a little awkward for the first couple of meetings, I think because neither of us were sure what the other expected, but by the third meeting we were starting to relax a little more.

My mentor was the first person to honestly critique my poetry and I found it challenging, both emotionally and mentally.

Until that point all my poetry was based on personal experience. The Commuter was inspired by my dad's daily commute and subsequent redundancy. Working with my mentor has given me the courage to explore my abilities, and his guidance on looking outside in has helped me write some of my best work to date. I have come so far in just a short space of time, and I don't think it would have been possible without his support and encouragement.

I have performed my poems at Southbank Centre, and have had my two Koestler Award winning poems on display at Turner Contemporary in Margate and one at the Supreme Court.

When I recited some of my work at the poetry café, the look on my mentor's face said it all. He was proud of me. I was proud of me.

Koestler Arts have given me this amazing opportunity. The work they do is invaluable to people like me who wouldn't otherwise be given a chance.