



Koestler Arts produce monthly Art Aid sheets featuring creative tasks that can be done in cell and with just paper and a pencil. New Art Aid sheets are available from the first Monday of every month. This sheet has been made with support from The Arts Society Northleach.

Although the 2024 Koestler Awards deadline passed on 12 April, we hope these sheets will inspire you to remain creative and perhaps try something new.

## July 2024

For each Art Aid sheet, we commission an artist or writer who has engaged with Koestler Arts to set a creative task and share their experience with creativity. This month we asked Koestler Award winner, published writer, former mentee, and now Koestler Awards judge, Charlotte.

Charlotte recently worked with us on our successful Radio 4 appeal, creating awareness of, and raising funds for, our arts mentoring scheme.

### My Story

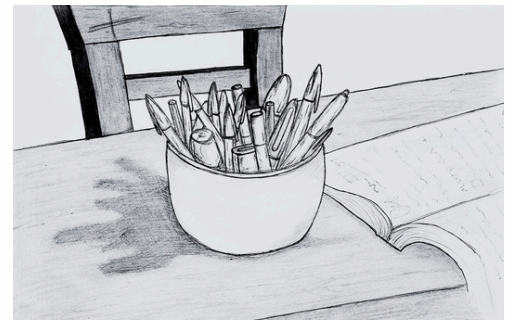
Whilst in prison I kept a diary and wrote every single day. Later, seeing my work published as part of a prison creative writing project gave me the confidence to continue writing. After being released, with the support of a Koestler mentor, I wrote short stories and progressed to writing a novel.

I continue to write and now work on longer fiction and script writing. Following a successful recording about food in prisons, I am also developing ideas for a podcast - inside and out of prison.

Creative talent needs to be unlocked. Writing is a fantastic way of coping with what is a chaotic existence in an environment where emotions run high. The escapism becomes personal, you can express feelings that have been bottled up for months and sometimes years.

It is extremely rewarding to now be a writing judge for Koestler Arts. We see some outstanding creativity and it is important to give individual feedback to entrants.

Koestler Arts changes perceptions every single day. Their mentoring programme enabled me to achieve more than I ever thought possible.



*In the Pen*, HM Prison Humber,  
Bronze Award for Drawing, 2021

## My Task: Every Picture Tells a Story

Most of you will have photos, cards, letters, notes, or other personal items on your wall or pinboard. I would like you to think about these meaningful things and write a story based on them. Often the best writing is based in what is personal and important to you.



*Prison Walls*, HM Prison Inverness,  
Highly Commended Award for  
Watercolour and Gouache, 2021

To begin with, choose one of these items and take time to look at and reflect on it. Consider the whole image or text, down to the small details. Don't worry about the length of your story, or about it being read by anyone else. Just start writing and write it for yourself.

**Characters:** If you choose a photo, who is in it? If you choose a card or note, who was it written by or about? These people will be the characters in your story. It might be that your photo is of a place and not of people, in which case you could create your own characters, or write about yourself. Think about what is happening for your characters, what are their hopes and feelings?

**Setting:** Does your item link to a particular place or occasion? Someone's home or birthday for example? This could be the setting for your story, or the event that is central to it.

**Action:** You might write about what people are doing in your chosen photo or note, or come up with fictional actions to bring it to life and create an exciting, amusing, or sentimental narrative.

**Structure:** Your story should have a beginning, middle, and end. While it's going to be based on the people, place and events associated with your chosen item, it can be completely fictional. You can decide what story you build around the item, and write your own ending.

You can repeat this task with the other items on your wall if you have more than one, or try writing the same story from different points of view if, for example, you choose a photo with multiple people in it. Just put pen to paper and remember - you are good enough!



*Outlook*, HM Prison Peterborough, Commended Award for Painting, 2021

You don't need to send your responses to these tasks to us at Koestler, we just hope you'll enjoy giving them a go. If you do we'll be very happy to see them but please note they won't be entered into this year's Koestler Awards and we won't be able to return them to you.