



KOESTLER ARTS - ART AID

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. 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.

August 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 former Koestler Exhibition Host and now Koestler Awards judge, Benjamin.

My Story

While I was in prison I submitted a lot of music to the Koestler Awards. I worked in a music studio for three years and during that time I received Koestler certificates and Awards. It felt incredibly rewarding to receive this recognition. Sharing my music from the inside and having it listened to and judged was powerful. I was learning to use software and becoming familiar with music production, and the feedback I received from judges was invaluable for developing my skills.

Now that I'm out, I've earned a Bachelor's degree in Psychology and Criminology and a Master's degree in Music Business Management. I've both received support from and worked with various charities, including the Prince's Trust, the Irene Taylor Trust, and Koestler Arts.

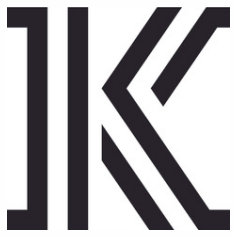
In 2022, I worked as an Exhibition Host at Koestler Arts' exhibition, *Freedom*, held at the Southbank Centre and curated by Ai Weiwei. I conducted tours for the public, sharing insights about the criminal justice system and my personal experiences, and information about the exhibited artwork. I was able to engage with students and professionals and the role helped me to network, develop skills and build confidence.

Last year I was invited to judge Song Writing entries to the 2023 Koestler Awards and this year I'll be judging Hip Hop, Rap and Grime entries. I really enjoy connecting with the emotions and experiences conveyed by entrants through their music and lyrics.

This journey has brought me to where I am today, using my experiences and education to help others. I'm committed to supporting those who are incarcerated, helping them find their voice through creativity.



Sanctuary, HM Young Offender Institution Feltham, G&J Charitable Trust Under 25s Special Award for Painting, 2022



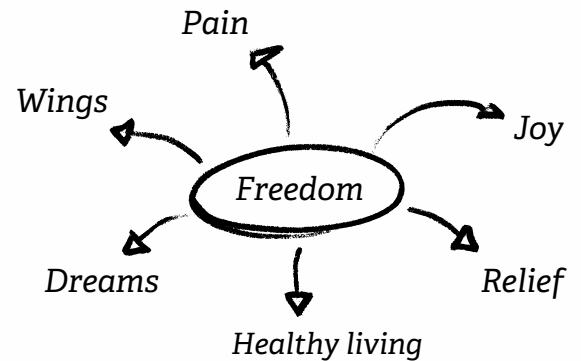
When judging Song Writing entries to the Koestler Awards, I found the most successful lyrics were based on the writer's emotions and experiences, and felt authentic to them.

These tips will help you write a song in any genre and tone you like, providing a starting point from which you can develop your own voice and style.

Start with a main concept that your song will be about. Try to think of something you feel strongly about or have experience of, or that is important to you. As an example, I've chosen 'freedom'.

Draw a spider diagram: write your concept in the middle of a piece of paper and write words or phrases around it that relate to it and evoke emotions and imagery.

Develop lyrics: use the spider diagram to guide your song writing. Each word and phrase can inspire lines or verses. Write lyrics that incorporate these, ensuring they align with the central concept. You might want to use slang to make your song relatable, and metaphors to add depth to your lyrics.



*Close my eyes take a breath
Cos I know I'm free,
Bagel is fresh with the eggs
And my smoothie green
Air all the calls from my ex
There's no loyalty
Judge sent me down, that was that
She quickly fled the scene*

*I can't lie it was weight off my mental
And for her to be free I could never
be resentful
All these bars of pain I hold it in, it's
detrimental
That's why I paint all these pictures
on the beats and instrumentals*

The chorus: this should be the most impactful part of your song. You might want to consider collaborating with another singer to sing the chorus and make it stand out. If you sing yourself, focus on bringing out the emotion in your voice to touch listeners.

Structure: try writing a song with a beginning, middle and end. Set up the main theme and tone of the song in the first verse and chorus, develop the story further in the next, adding depth and complexity, and then bring the song to a resolution by the end.

For 'freedom', you could describe the struggle and pain before achieving freedom, reflect on the journey of redemption and personal growth, and conclude with a message of hope and the value of freedom.

Excerpt from *Gold Harp*, courtesy of Benjamin

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.