



# KOESTLER ARTS - ART AID

Koestler Arts produce monthly Art Aid sheets featuring creative tasks that can be done in your cell or room with just paper and pencil. The 2026 Koestler Awards deadline has now passed, but we hope these sheets will inspire you to remain creative and perhaps try something new.

## JUNE 2026

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 and mentee, Leesha.

### My Story

Writing has helped me process memories, emotions, and experiences that once felt too heavy to carry silently. Through storytelling, poetry, and creativity, I found a way to express parts of myself that were difficult to speak about out loud.

Part of my own journey includes spending time in prison, where creativity became far more than just a hobby; it became an escape, an outlet, and a way to hold onto my identity during difficult moments. Writing gave me space to reflect, release emotions, and say the things I often struggled to say aloud.

Since 2022, I have entered several pieces of poetry into the Koestler Awards and won a few awards along the way. Poetry became one of the most important ways for me to express myself, especially during times when I felt unheard or emotionally overwhelmed.

Since my release, I have continued working with Koestler and staying connected to the creative community they provide. In March 2026, I was invited to perform my poetry live for the first time, which was an outstanding opportunity and a moment I will never forget. I loved every moment of it. Performing something so personal in front of others was both emotional and empowering, and it reminded me how powerful creativity can be in bringing people together and helping people find their voice.

I am also currently writing a memoir based on my childhood and teenage years, exploring both painful experiences and the moments of hope, resilience, and connection that shaped me. Through writing, I began turning difficult memories into something meaningful.

I believe creativity can help people feel seen, understood, and connected; even in difficult places or difficult moments.



## My Task: An Ode To...

Often the best writing comes from the things we know, love, and connect to personally.

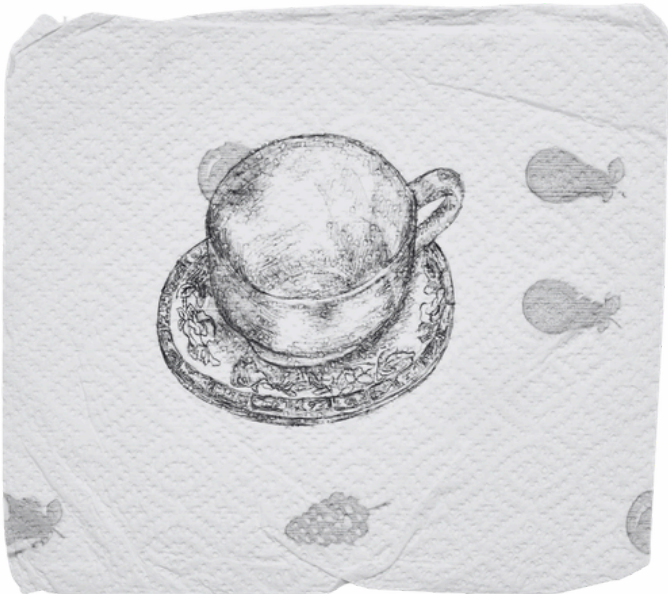
For this exercise, write a poem about something or someone that brings you joy, comfort, peace, or happiness. It could be something big or something very small.

This type of poem is sometimes called an 'Ode', a poem that celebrates or appreciates something meaningful to you.

Your poem does not need to rhyme or sound formal. There are no rules about how poetry should sound. The most important thing is honesty, feeling, and creativity.

Sometimes writing about joy can help us reconnect with parts of ourselves that difficult experiences may have hidden. Creativity gives us permission to slow down, reflect, and notice the things that still bring light into our lives.

I have written a short example below; my ode to a cup of tea.



You never ask questions,  
never demand explanations.

You simply wait;  
warm, patient, steady in my hands.

Some days you taste like comfort,  
other days like survival.

*Life is Like a Cup of Rosie Lee,*  
Kent, Surrey, Sussex CRC - Gravesend,  
Vanessa Jackson RA Bronze Award for Drawing,  
2018

You don't need to send responses to these tasks to us, we just hope you'll enjoy giving them a go. If you do we'll be 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.