

The Shape of Joy

Joy can be explosive or quiet, fleeting or hard-won. It can arrive unexpectedly or be something we fight to hold on to. In a world that often feels heavy with distraction, fear, and noise, moments of joy can feel both radical and rare. But they still exist—sometimes in small gestures, sometimes in life-changing events.

Write a piece of creative writing—either a poem or a short story—exploring the theme of joy and how it manifests in human experience. Consider these questions as you write:

- What does joy look or feel like in different lives?
- Can joy exist alongside grief, pain, or struggle?
- Is joy something that finds us, or something we have to choose?
- What happens when a character discovers an unexpected source of joy—or loses it?

Genre Guidelines

1. **Poem:** Capture a moment, emotion, or image of joy—whether bright and unrestrained or subtle and bittersweet. Use rhythm, metaphor, and sensory detail to make the reader feel the joy you describe.
2. **Short Story:** Create a narrative centered on a character's pursuit, loss, or rediscovery of joy. Consider how setting, conflict, or relationships might reveal what joy means in your character's world.