

Writing Feedback

TERM 2 | WEEK 3 WRITING | 18th May | Y5 SCHOLARSHIP

#1 (Opening paragraph - "In the forgotten town of Stillwater...")

Strengths: Your opening creates a strong atmosphere with vivid details like "paint curled like old paper" and "doors groaned like someone remembering pain." You establish the mysterious tone effectively by introducing the cold key that gives people strange dreams.

Weakness: Unclear setting connection → Your writing jumps between describing the town and the house without showing how they connect to each other. You mention "dry hills and whispering woods" but don't explain how these relate to the house or why this location matters to the story.

Exemplar: *In the forgotten town of Stillwater, where dry hills surrounded the main street and whispering woods bordered the old houses, there stood one home that had been empty for years.*

#2 (Paragraph about Ethel's mother - "The reflection of doors...")

Strengths: You connect Ethel's past to her present situation well, showing why she wants to unlock secrets. Your use of "grief pressing at her ribs" creates a clear emotional picture.

Weakness: Confusing sentence structure → Your opening sentence "The reflection of doors—closed, locked, forgotten—had run through Ethel's life" doesn't make clear sense. Reflections can't run through someone's life, and this metaphor makes the meaning hard to follow.

Exemplar: *Memories of locked doors—closed, hidden, forgotten—had followed Ethel throughout her childhood.*

#3 (Ending paragraph - "She left the key on the nail...")

Strengths: You create a satisfying circular ending by returning the key to where it started. Your final line about the key waiting "like memory" connects well to the story's themes.

Weakness: Rushed conclusion → Your ending moves too quickly from Ethel's discovery to her leaving without showing her emotional response to learning about her mother's past. You don't explain how this knowledge changes her or what she plans to do next.

Exemplar: *After sitting quietly and thinking about everything she had learned, Ethel carefully placed the key back on the nail, knowing that others might need to discover their own family secrets.*

■ Your piece tells an engaging story about family secrets and has good atmospheric writing. However, you could improve the depth by showing more of Ethel's thoughts and feelings when she discovers her mother's past. Additionally, some sentences need clearer structure to help readers follow your ideas better. Also, you could strengthen the connection between the mysterious elements and the real family history to make the story feel more complete.

Actionable task: Take the paragraph where Ethel finds her mother's trunk and add more details about her emotions and thoughts. Additionally, revise the sentence about "reflection of doors" to make the meaning clearer for readers.

Score: 43/50

Section 2:

The key

In the forgotten town of Stillwater, nestled between dry hills and the whispering woods, there was a house that had long since stopped belonging to anyone. Its windows were clouded over, its paint curled like old paper, and its doors groaned like someone remembering pain. But most curious of all was the key—an iron thing, heavy and intricate, hanging from a rusted nail on the front porch. #1

~~Locals~~ [The locals] spoke of the key as if it had its own memory. Children dared each other to touch it, though none ever lasted long. It was always cold, too cold, even in July, and those who touched it claimed to dream of rooms they had never seen and voices they didn't recognise [recognise].

Ethel, newly arrived and still raw from her mother's passing, found herself walking past the house almost every day. She didn't believe in stories, only in what was left behind. And so, one evening, as the sun sank and the crows settled into the trees like shadows, she took the key from the nail.

~~The reflection of doors—closed, locked, forgotten—had run through Ethel's life since childhood.~~ [Memories of locked doors—closed, locked, forgotten—had followed Ethel since childhood.] Her mother had kept things hidden: boxes under beds, letters unopened, names never spoken. "Some doors," her mother would say, "are better left shut." But Ethel, grief pressing at her ribs, no longer wanted to obey locks. She needed answers, not silence. #2

The key fit perfectly in the house's front door. The lock clicked like a throat clearing after a long wait. Inside, the air was thick, like syrup, and the silence had teeth. The rooms held dust in deep layers, but also something else—recognition. A chair identical to one from her childhood living room. A chipped vase she swore her mother once held. Portraits on the wall whose eyes mirrored hers.

Ethel wandered deeper, each room unfolding like a page in a story she hadn't known she was reading. The key stayed in her palm, warmer now, almost pulsing. It seemed to want her to go further.

In the attic, she found a trunk with her mother's name engraved faintly in the wood. Inside were journals, old photographs, and a birth certificate: Ethel's, but with a different surname. Pieces clicked together—her mother had once lived here, had left, and locked it all away.

The key had not just opened a house. It had opened a history.

As dawn broke, the house seemed to breathe. Ethel sat on the porch, the key beside her. It was no longer cold. She ~~realized~~ [realised] then that the key had never belonged to the house, ~~more~~ [but to] the truth. And the truth, like a door, only matters when someone is willing to walk through.

~~She left the key on the nail where she'd found it. Someone else might need it.~~ [After thinking about everything she had discovered, she left the key on the nail where she'd found it, knowing someone else might need it.] Stillwater had many locked doors—and the key, like memory, had always waited. #3