

Writing Feedback

TERM 2 | WEEK 3 WRITING | 19th May | Y5 SCHOLARSHIP

Section 1:

#1 "The key was colder than death. It felt heavy in her hand, artificially sanitized amid the dust-choked relics of her grandmother's attic. Where the doorknobs were tarnished and the porcelain was cracked, this key shone, a sliver of untarnished metal in a world that had long since rusted. But it was not the shine that made Elara's heart tremble, it was the blood. Still wet. Still warm."

Strengths: Your sensory details are vivid and immediately establish an eerie atmosphere. The contrast between the pristine key and the decaying surroundings creates visual tension.

Weakness: Underdeveloped character motivation. → While you've created a compelling atmosphere, Elara's emotional connection to finding the key lacks depth. The reader doesn't yet understand why she would pick up a bloodied key rather than recoil from it.

Exemplar: *The key was colder than death. It felt heavy in her hand, artificially sanitized amid the dust-choked relics of her grandmother's attic. Elara's fingers trembled as they closed around it—this object her mother had whispered about in her final, feverish days.*

#2 "Each toll echoed through the bones of the house—and hers. Her mother's scream, or something mimicking her, tore from the other side of the forbidden door. Her hand hung suspended in mid-air. The floorboards behind her screeched as if under the weight of something that had no business walking on two legs."

Strengths: Your timing and pacing here build excellent tension. The use of sound creates a multi-sensory experience that draws the reader in deeply.

Weakness: Underdeveloped stakes. → While we feel the tension building, it's not entirely clear what Elara stands to gain or lose by opening the door. "The truth of her mother's disappearance" is mentioned earlier but feels disconnected from this climactic moment.

Exemplar: *Each toll echoed through the bones of the house—and hers. 'Elara, please,' her mother's voice—or something mimicking her—called from beyond the forbidden door. 'I've been trapped here for ten years. Only you can free me now.' Elara's hand*

trembled, knowing what her grandmother's journal had warned: those who open the door never return as themselves.

#3 "The key turned in her hand, metal opening like a dying flower. She felt it become one with her flesh, brass veins spreading up her arm. It was not a tool anymore. It was a part of her. A part of her heritage, truth, insanity, or both."

Strengths: Your metaphorical language here is striking and original. The transformation of the key creates a powerful visual and suggests deeper thematic connections.

Weakness: Unresolved thematic elements. → The concept of heritage and family secrets is introduced but not fully explored in relation to the key's transformation. The connection between the physical metamorphosis and the family's history needs stronger development.

Exemplar: ***The key turned in her hand, metal opening like a dying flower. She felt it become one with her flesh, brass veins spreading up her arm—just as her grandmother had described in the hidden diary. 'The price of knowing,' the final entry had warned, 'is becoming the keeper of doors between worlds, as every firstborn daughter has for seven generations.'***

Your narrative builds tension effectively through sensory details and atmosphere, creating a compelling horror scenario. The imagery of the key, the forbidden door, and the mysterious family secret all work together to establish intrigue. However, your piece would benefit from clearer character motivations and more specific stakes. Currently, we understand that something supernatural and threatening is happening, but the personal significance to Elara remains somewhat vague.

Additionally, the family history elements introduced could be more tightly woven throughout. Consider establishing earlier what Elara knows about her family's secrets and why she's willing to take such risks. This would make her decision to use the key more meaningful and the consequences more impactful.

The ending provides a strong climactic moment but leaves the reader with questions about what exactly happened. While some ambiguity is effective in horror, providing a few more concrete details about what Elara discovers would strengthen the impact of your conclusion.

■ I recommend focusing on developing a clearer through-line of the family's history with this supernatural element. Also, consider adding a brief moment earlier in the narrative

where Elara reflects on specific memories or knowledge of her mother that drives her determination to open the door despite the warnings. Furthermore, the relationship between Elara and her brother could be expanded slightly to add emotional weight to her decision to ignore his warning.

Overall Score: 44/50

Section 2:

The Last Key

The key was colder than death. It felt heavy in her hand, artificially sanitized amid the dust-choked relics of her grandmother's attic. Where the doorknobs were tarnished and the porcelain was cracked, this key shone, a sliver of untarnished metal in a world that had long since rusted. But it was not the shine that made Elara's heart tremble, it was the blood. Still wet. Still warm. It ran down the silver shaft like a tear that had not been hers.

#1

She should have left it alone. Should have returned it to the floorboards beneath her bedroom, tucked in an envelope labelled only: DO NOT OPEN UNTIL THE LAST NIGHT. It was the last night. A dry wind moaned through the broken attic slats, sending ~~he~~ [the] thick cloud of moths and memories into a swirl. Elara's mouth dried. The attic door groaned shut behind her as if the house itself resented the intrusion. The door at the end of the hall—the one her family had always pretended didn't exist, wasn't pretending anymore. There was a soft light pulsing under it, green and wrong, like the light of rot under a festering wound. And the key [,] it pulsed with it.

"Don't," her brother's voice grated up from the trapdoor below, his words little more than audible over the creak of settling wood. "She said never to open it."

"She spoke to us of many things," Elara whispered, her eyes fixed on the door. Her breath hitched. What if behind that door was the truth of her mother's disappearance? What if the key finally unlocked the lies that had rotted through their family for centuries? But what if... what if she unleashed something worse?

She stepped ahead. The key bit into her palm, jagged now, its teeth crunching like broken glass. Blood oozed, flowing between her fingers. She did not flinch. She could not. This was her only chance.

The grandfather clock tolled below her. Midnight was closing in. The envelope had said last night. Not tomorrow. Not next week. Now. Each toll echoed through the bones of the house—and hers. Her mother's scream, or something mimicking her, tore from the other side of the forbidden door. Her hand hung suspended in mid-air. The floorboards behind her screeched as if under the weight of something that had no business walking on two legs. #2

The key turned in her hand, metal opening like a dying flower. She felt it become one with her flesh, brass veins spreading up her arm. It was not a tool anymore. It was a part of her. A part of her heritage, truth, insanity, or both. #3

"Choose," a voice whispered inside her own head, gentle, maternal, poisonous. "Turn the key and see. Or walk away and live blind.

"~~She~~ [She] turned it. Click. Grind. Scream. The door exploded open. Cold wind. Black feathers. A thousand eyes opening in the darkness. Elara screamed. Or maybe she laughed. She was falling, no, being pulled. Into the truth.