

Section 1:

#1 "It was an ordinary Saturday morning when Maya went for a walk in the bush behind her grandparents' farm. She liked the peace and quiet there, the sound of the birds calling to one another, and the smell of the flowers, it was just so pleasant. The path she followed was one she had walked many times, crossing through tall trees and around large rocks covered in moss."

Strengths: Your opening establishes the setting effectively. The sensory details about birds, flowers and moss create a vivid Australian bush environment.

Weakness: Run-on sentence and comma splice → The second sentence has a comma splice where two complete thoughts are incorrectly joined with a comma. This makes the flow choppy and confusing for the reader. "...and the smell of the flowers, it was just so pleasant" should be corrected.

Exemplar: *She liked the peace and quiet there, the sound of the birds calling to one another, and the sweet smell of native flowers that made the bushland feel so pleasant.*

#2 "The afternoon sun warm on her back and the sound of rushing water soothing her thoughts. Birds chirped in the trees above, and dragonflies darted across the surface of the stream like tiny blue sparks. But that day, something was different."

Strengths: Your use of imagery like "tiny blue sparks" creates beautiful visual details. The ending sentence creates suspense and draws the reader in.

Weakness: Sentence fragment → The first sentence is incomplete as it lacks a main verb. It starts with "The afternoon sun warm..." but doesn't complete the thought with a proper verb structure. This makes it difficult for readers to understand the complete action.

Exemplar: *The afternoon sun felt warm on her back while the sound of rushing water soothed her thoughts.*

#3 "In the middle of the clearing was something she couldn't explain. A large, glowing circle floated in the air, not touching the ground or anywhere. It shimmered, like the surface of a bubble, but inside it was a scene that didn't match the bushland around her. Through the glowing circle, she saw a busy city street—people walking quickly, cars rushing past, tall skyscrapers rising into the sky."

Strengths: Your description of the mysterious portal creates a clear, intriguing image. The contrast between the natural bushland and urban scene adds to the wonder.

Weakness: Vague description → The phrase "not touching the ground or anywhere" is unclear and doesn't give readers a precise understanding of how the circle was positioned. You could be more specific about its exact placement in the air to help readers visualise it better.

Exemplar: *A large, glowing circle floated in the air about a metre above the ground, suspended as if by invisible threads.*

■ Your story has a captivating concept about a mysterious portal that reveals hidden layers of reality. The emotional journey of Maya discovering something magical is engaging. To improve, you could add more specific details about Maya's feelings throughout the encounter. How did her heart feel? Did her hands shake? Was she afraid or excited? Also, you could strengthen the ending by showing one specific way Maya's life changed after her discovery. Perhaps she started a journal of strange occurrences or began exploring new areas of the bush. You might also add dialogue if Maya tells someone what she saw, even partially. The descriptions of the portal could be more detailed - what colours swirled within it? Did it make any sounds? Did the air feel different nearby? These sensory details would make your reader feel like they're standing right beside Maya during this magical moment.

Score: 44/50

Section 2:

The Moment Time Stopped

It was an ordinary Saturday morning when Maya went for a walk in the bush behind her grandparents' farm. She liked the peace and quiet there, the sound of the birds calling to one another, and ~~the smell of the flowers, it was just so pleasant.~~ [the smell of the flowers that made the place so pleasant.] The path she followed was one she had walked many times, crossing through tall trees and around large rocks covered in moss.

~~The afternoon sun warm on her back and the sound of rushing water soothing her thoughts.~~ [The afternoon sun was warm on her back and the sound of rushing water soothed her thoughts.] Birds chirped in the trees above, and dragonflies darted across the surface of the stream like tiny blue sparks. But that day, something was different.

As Maya rounded a bend near the creek, she noticed a strange glow coming from ahead. It wasn't sunlight, this was brighter and shimmering with silver, like moonlight, but in the middle of the day. Curious, she stepped off the path and pushed through the bushes.

In the middle of the clearing was something she couldn't explain. A large, glowing circle floated in the air, ~~not touching the ground or anywhere.~~ [hovering mysteriously above the forest floor.] It shimmered, like the surface of a bubble, but inside it was a scene that didn't match the bushland around her.

Through the glowing circle, she saw a busy city street—people walking quickly, cars rushing past, tall skyscrapers rising into the sky.

Maya blinked. Her heart began to race. She looked around to see if anyone else was there, but she was alone. The birds had gone quiet. Even the wind seemed to have stopped. Everything felt still, as though the world was holding its breath.

A bird flew past and, without hesitation, darted through the circle. It vanished instantly. Maya stared, frozen in place. A few seconds later, the exact same bird came back through from the other side. It flew as if nothing strange had happened at all.

Maya didn't know what she was seeing. Was it a dream? A trick of the light? She wasn't sure. But deep inside, she felt something shift. She had always believed the world was simple, just what you could see, hear, and touch. But now she wasn't so sure. Maybe there were parts of the world that most people never noticed. Maybe there were hidden places, or secret things that didn't fit inside the rules she had always trusted.

She stood there for a very long time, watching the glowing circle and the busy world inside it. Nothing else came through. Nothing else moved. And then, slowly, the light began to fade. The circle shrank until it was gone, leaving only sunlight and trees behind.

The bushland looked the same again. But Maya didn't feel the same.

She walked home slowly, her mind full of questions. She didn't tell anyone what she had seen. It wasn't because she was scared, but because she didn't have the words to explain it. How could she describe something that felt both real and impossible at the same time?

From that day on, Maya saw the world differently. She began to look more closely at everything, the flicker of light through the trees, the way shadows moved around, the quiet spaces between sounds. She started to wonder what else might be hidden, just out of sight, waiting to be found.

She paid more attention in science class. She read books about space, time, and the mysteries of nature. But even with all her learning, nothing explained what she had seen that day.

Maya never saw the glowing circle again. But the memory stayed with her, bright and strange. It remained a mystery. Deep down, she knew the world was bigger, stranger, and more magical than she had ever imagined.