

## Section 1:

**#1: Opening paragraph - bag preparation and anticipation** Strengths: Your piece creates immediate engagement through the personification of the bag as "a loyal pet waiting to be taken along," which effectively conveys Liam's excitement. The detail about hiding the teddy bear shows authentic childhood behaviour and establishes character depth.

Weakness: Sentence structure imbalance → Your opening relies heavily on simple sentence constructions that create a choppy rhythm. The phrase "At the last minute, he tucked his old teddy between his jumpers" feels disconnected from the previous sentences and disrupts the flow.

Exemplar: *At the last minute, he carefully tucked his old teddy between his jumpers, ensuring it remained completely hidden beneath everything else, just in case he needed the comfort during the night.*

**#2: Car journey and arrival at Josh's house** Strengths: Your writing effectively captures nervous anticipation through specific details like fumbling with shoelaces and the welcoming imagery of "bright red door and flower pots with smiling sunflowers." The sensory detail of cookies "that smelled like melted chocolate and something warm and buttery" creates vivid atmosphere.

Weakness: Transition gaps → The shift from car journey thoughts to arrival feels abrupt. Your writing jumps from internal worries directly to the house description without connecting these moments smoothly.

Exemplar: *As the car pulled into the driveway, Liam's worries began to fade when he spotted Josh's house with its bright red door and cheerful flower pots filled with smiling sunflowers.*

**#3: Night-time anxiety and resolution** Strengths: Your piece demonstrates sophisticated emotional complexity by contrasting daytime confidence with night-time vulnerability. The metaphor "thoughts ran around in his head like marbles" effectively conveys restless anxiety, and the circular return to positive memories shows good structural awareness.

Weakness: Repetitive phrasing patterns → Your writing overuses similar sentence beginnings, particularly "What" questions and "Maybe" statements. The phrase "just in case" appears twice in close proximity, creating unnecessary repetition.

Exemplar: *While questions tumbled through his mind—wondering about the time and whether Mum was still awake—he remembered the warmth of Josh's friendship and the joy they'd shared building their fort.*

■ Your piece demonstrates strong emotional authenticity and genuine understanding of childhood experiences. The character of Liam feels believable, and you've captured the complex emotions surrounding first sleepovers effectively. However, your writing would benefit from more sophisticated sentence structures and smoother transitions between scenes. Consider varying your sentence beginnings to create better rhythm and flow. Additionally, work on connecting your paragraphs more seamlessly—each scene should naturally lead to the next. Your dialogue and sensory details are particularly strong, so continue developing these elements. Also, try expanding some of your shorter sentences into more complex structures that can carry deeper meaning. The emotional arc of your story works well, moving from anticipation through enjoyment to anxiety and finally acceptance, but strengthening the connections between these stages will make your narrative more cohesive and engaging for readers.

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**Overall Score: 44/50**

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## Section 2:

#1 Liam's bag had been packed since the night before, even though the sleepover wasn't until Saturday. Now it sat by the front door like a loyal pet waiting to be taken along. He had packed his pyjamas, toothbrush, and the comic book he and Josh always laughed at during break time. ~~At the last minute, he tucked his old teddy between his jumpers, just in case, but made sure it stayed hidden under everything else.~~ [At the last minute, he carefully tucked his old teddy between his jumpers—just in case he needed comfort—ensuring it remained completely hidden beneath everything else.]

#2 That morning, Liam kept peeking out the window, counting how many cars passed until it was finally time. When Mum called, "Shoes on! Let's go," his fingers fumbled with the laces, and he had to start over twice. The car ride wasn't long, but the trees outside blurred together as he stared ahead, imagining Josh's house: Would the ~~living room~~ [lounge room] be big? What if the dinner was something weird? What if everyone fell asleep and he was the only one still awake?

~~Josh's house had a bright red door and flower pots with smiling sunflowers.~~ [As the car pulled into the driveway, Liam spotted Josh's house with its bright red door and flower pots filled with smiling sunflowers.] His mum opened the door before they even knocked, holding a tray with ~~cookies~~ [biscuits] that smelled like melted chocolate and something warm and buttery. Liam gave a small wave and tried not to wipe his hands on his jeans.

#3 In Josh's room, posters of superheroes covered the walls, and there was a beanbag that looked like a cloud. They built a fort with chairs and blankets, using torches as secret lamps. They played video games and shouted at the screen like pirates. Liam's voice started to sound braver the longer they played.

But later, after the lights went out and the house grew quiet, the noises changed. The hum of the fridge downstairs, the creaks in the hallway, even Josh's steady breathing [—] they were sounds Liam didn't know. The ceiling above looked different from the one he stared at every night. He pulled the blanket up to his chin and slipped one hand into the side pocket of his bag until his fingers found a soft ear [—] the teddy. His other hand stayed still outside the covers, just in case [in case] Josh woke up.

~~Thoughts ran around in his head like marbles: What time was it? Would Mum still be awake? Should he have said no to staying the night?~~ [While thoughts tumbled through his mind like scattered marbles—wondering about the time, whether Mum was still awake, and if he should have declined the sleepover—he gradually remembered happier moments.] But then he remembered the ~~cookies~~ [biscuits] and the fort and how Josh had said, "It's awesome you're sleeping over. I've never had a sleepover mate before."

Liam didn't answer out loud then, but now, lying in the quiet dark, he squeezed the teddy once and let his eyes close a little. ~~Maybe, if he just stayed still, sleep would come on its own. Maybe tomorrow, they could build a fort even taller.~~ [Perhaps, if he remained still, sleep would arrive naturally, and tomorrow they could construct an even more magnificent fort.]