

Section 1:

#1 - Opening paragraphs (first three paragraphs) **Strengths:** Your opening creates immediate tension with vivid body language like "jaw tight, arms folded like a wall." The confession "I didn't even know what I'd done" draws readers in by establishing mystery.

Weakness: Unclear motivation → Your character's reasoning for hiding something from Mia lacks clarity. You mention "something inside me said it wasn't something for her to know" but never explain what this "something" actually was. This vagueness makes it difficult for readers to understand why the narrator made these choices in the first place.

Exemplar: *Instead of "something inside me said it wasn't something for her to know," try "I worried that telling Mia about my parents' problems would burden her with my troubles."*

#2 - Middle section (lunch scene and project setup) **Strengths:** The lunch scene effectively shows the friendship's strain through actions rather than just telling. The metaphor "like a bubble had settled over us" creates a strong sense of isolation.

Weakness: Rushed pacing → Your transition from lunch rejection to the project conversation happens too quickly. You write "I guess I'd have to wait... until the project" then immediately jump to them sitting together without explaining how this situation came about or what project brought them together.

Exemplar: *Add a bridge like "The next day in English class, Mrs. Thompson assigned us as partners for our poetry project. Mia sat down across from me reluctantly, her eyes still avoiding mine."*

#3 - Resolution (confession and reconciliation) **Strengths:** The simultaneous "Listen" creates a touching moment that shows their deep connection. Your dialogue feels natural and age-appropriate for the characters.

Weakness: Insufficient emotional depth → Your resolution feels too neat and quick. After ten years of friendship and this significant breach of trust, Mia forgives almost immediately with just "I'm sorry, Em." The emotional weight of betrayal and forgiveness deserves more exploration.

Exemplar: *Try "Mia sat quietly for a long moment, then said, 'I understand why you felt scared, Em, but it really hurt when you shut me out. I kept wondering what I'd done wrong.'"*

■ Your piece captures the authentic feelings of friendship conflict well, particularly through body language and dialogue. However, your story would benefit from more detailed character development and clearer explanations of motivations. The central conflict—hiding something from a best friend—has strong potential, but you need to specify what exactly was being hidden earlier in the story. Additionally, your pacing moves too quickly through important emotional moments. Consider expanding the middle section to show more of their friendship's history and the gradual breakdown of trust. Also, spend more time on the reconciliation to make it feel earned rather than

rushed. Your metaphors work effectively, especially the sunflower comparison, but ensure each scene has enough space to breathe and develop naturally.

Overall Score: 45/50

Section 2:

#1 At first, Mia wouldn't even look at me. She brushed past in the hallway like I wasn't there - jaw tight, arms folded like a wall I couldn't get through. I tried to explain, but she cut me off with a glare sharp enough to stop me mid-sentence.

The worst part? I didn't even know what I'd done - at least, not really.

I had been meaning to tell her. But something inside me said it wasn't something for her to know. So I pushed it down, deeper and deeper, forcing my feelings away whenever she was near. But eventually, Mia began to notice. My blank stares, the way I drifted during conversations, the way I misunderstood even the simplest things - it all added up.

I thought hiding it from her, twisting the truth into little lies I could barely recognise, would protect our friendship. Deep down, I knew I was wrong, but I kept brushing the thought away. I told myself she wouldn't understand, even after ten years. I didn't know why I felt like I couldn't trust her, when she'd always been the sun to my sunflower.

#2 At lunch, I caught a flicker of doubt in her eyes. She paused near our usual spot - then turned and sat with another group of girls. My heart sank. I had been hoping that today would be the day I finally told her. I guess I'd have to wait... until the project.

We sat on opposite ends of our table, the space between us wide and cold. I noticed her glance at me, then look away again, as if trying to say something without words - something only a friendship as deep as ours could understand. The sound of laughter and clinking cutlery around us faded. It was like a bubble had settled over us, muffling everything except the silence so fragile between us [that] it felt like it could've been broken by a pin drop.

#3 "Listen."

We said it at the same time, and despite everything, we both smiled.

"No, me first, Mia," I said.

And then I told her...everything. The truth... no twists or lies - just the absolute truth. I spoke slowly, carefully, word by word. I saw her eyebrows raise, her lips part slightly, but she never

interrupted me. I told her about how I'd been juggling so many things, about how my parents' divorce had made me feel heavier and lonelier. I guess I forgot I had her.

When I finished, she sighed.

"I'm sorry, Em. But you should have told me earlier." Her voice was soft now. "We're not just best friends, we're sisters. We can't hide things from each other. Otherwise we might risk... this."

We leaned in and hugged - warm and true.

And in that moment, we both thought the same thing - no matter what, our sunflower wasn't wilting. It was still standing tall, ready to face whatever storm came next.