

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph

Strengths:

- Your opening creates a lovely picture in the reader's mind with words like "dusty shop" and "worn smooth," which help us see and feel the old guitar clearly.
- You've chosen excellent descriptive words such as "timeworn" and "quiet dignity" that make the guitar feel special and important from the very beginning.

Vague sensory connection → Whilst you mention the guitar's appearance well, the connection between what the guitar looks like and what it means could be stronger. The phrase "each scratch whispered stories" is nice, but you don't show us what those stories might be. Are they happy stories? Sad ones? By adding one specific example or image of what kind of evening or stage you imagine, you'd help readers connect more deeply with the guitar's history.

Exemplar: *"...as if each scratch whispered stories—perhaps of a grandmother teaching her grandson his first melody, or a street musician playing for coins on rainy evenings."*

#2: Middle section (paragraphs 3-5)

Strengths:

- Your description of the luthier is wonderful, particularly the detail about "indelible stains of varnish" and grooves in his skin, which shows his experience through physical details.
- The phrase "polished not by sandpaper, but by the sweat and passion of players" beautifully explains how the guitar was shaped by people rather than just tools.

Telling rather than showing emotional impact → When you write "A sudden ache swelled in my chest—half-joy, half-lament," you're telling us what you felt, but you're not showing us through your actions or thoughts. Instead of naming the feeling, you could describe what happened to your body or what thoughts went through your mind. Did your hand shake? Did you remember something specific? Did you need to take a breath? This would make the emotion feel more real to readers.

Exemplar: *"My hand trembled on the strings, and I found myself blinking quickly, remembering the calluses I'd once earned from hours of practice."*

#3: Final paragraph

Strengths:

- Your ending brings the piece full circle nicely by showing that you've made a decision about the guitar, which gives readers a sense of completion.

Rushed conclusion lacking reflection → Your final paragraph moves too quickly from the luthier's comment to your decision. The jump from "It chooses its player" to "I knew then that I couldn't leave it behind" doesn't give readers enough time to understand why this moment matters so much. What did you think about between hearing those words and making your choice? What doubts did you have? What convinced you? By slowing down this moment and showing your thinking process, you'd create a more satisfying ending that feels earned rather than sudden.

Exemplar: *"I looked down at the guitar, then at my empty hands, remembering all the years I'd let pass without music. Could I really do this again? The luthier's words echoed in my mind, and slowly, I nodded. 'I'll take it,' I said, my voice barely a whisper."*

■ Your piece contains beautiful descriptive language and creates a clear atmosphere in the guitar shop. The imagery of the worn instrument and the experienced luthier works well together. However, your writing would benefit from showing more of your internal journey rather than simply telling readers what you felt. When you write about emotions like the "ache" in your chest or feeling "forgotten courage," you're naming feelings instead of demonstrating them through specific thoughts, memories, or physical reactions. Additionally, your paragraphs in the middle section could connect more smoothly to each other. For instance, when you move from playing the guitar to feeling the ache, you could add a sentence that links these ideas together, explaining what triggered that emotion. Also, your conclusion needs more space to breathe—right now, it feels rushed. Take the final two paragraphs and expand them into three or four, showing the moments of doubt, consideration, and finally certainty that led to your decision. This will help readers feel like they're experiencing the moment with you rather than just reading about it afterwards.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2

#1 The guitar rested in the corner of the dusty shop, its surface worn smooth by countless hands long gone. Its body was timeworn, the varnish faded to a dull amber, yet something about it held a quiet dignity, as if each scratch whispered stories of evenings around firelight or dimly lit stages.

When I reached for it, the strings gave a faint, trembling sigh, and a chord seemed to reverberate through the room even before I strummed. The sound was fragile, but it carried a strange resonance, one that lingered inside my chest like a heartbeat I hadn't known was missing.

#2 The shop's owner, a grey-haired luthier, emerged from behind a counter stacked with tools and shavings of spruce and maple. His hands bore the indelible stains of varnish, each groove in his skin marked by years of crafting and repairing. He didn't speak at first—just watched me cradle the instrument as though I had stumbled across an old friend.

"This guitar has seen more lives than either of us," he finally said, his voice quiet, reverent. He ran his hand across the neck, where the wood had been polished not by sandpaper, but by the sweat and passion of players whose names had long since faded into yore.

I brushed my fingers across the strings again, and a melody rose, hesitant at first, then lilting like a remembered lullaby. The notes seemed to waft through the dusty air, curling between shafts of afternoon light and settling gently around us.

A sudden ache swelled in my chest—half-joy, half-lament—as though the guitar carried not only music but the emotions of those who had held it before. Every chord was intertwined with laughter, grief, love [,] and loss, woven together so tightly they could no longer be separated.

For a moment, I felt something stir inside me, a flicker of forgotten courage, a reminder of nights spent playing until my fingers ached, when the world was smaller and dreams were transcendent. ~~The guitar seemed to breathe that memory back into me, urging me to remember not only who I was but who I~~

~~still could be.~~ **[The guitar seemed to breathe that memory back into me, and I felt it urging me to remember not only who I was but who I still could be.]**

#3 The luthier's eyes softened as he saw the change in me. "It chooses its player," he murmured, almost to himself.

I knew then that I couldn't leave it behind. It wasn't just wood and strings—it was a vessel of stories, bound across time, waiting for its next chapter. And in the quiet, I promised to give it voice again.