

Section 1:

#1: Opening paragraph

Strengths:

- Your opening creates immediate tension by showing Ella's emotional connection to the pendant, making readers care about what happens next.
- The sensory details like "hollow chill spread through her chest" help readers feel what Ella is experiencing.

Vague Emotional Grounding → Whilst you've told us the pendant means courage and connection to her grandmother, you haven't shown us specific memories or moments that make this true. When you write "it was her talisman of courage," this feels like you're telling rather than showing. What specific moment did the pendant help her through? What did her grandmother say when she gave it? Without these details, the pendant's importance feels surface-level rather than deeply meaningful.

Exemplar: *"She leapt from bed, her mind flashing to the day Grandma had clasped it round her neck, whispering, 'When you feel small, touch this star.' It had steadied her through her first day at secondary school, through the night Dad was in hospital—and now it was gone."*

#2: Chase sequence (paragraphs 2-3)

Strengths:

- The action moves quickly and keeps readers engaged as Ella pursues the magpie through different settings.
- Physical details like "brambles tugged at her sleeves" and "slipped into a freezing stream" make the journey feel real.

Underdeveloped Internal Conflict → Your writing focuses heavily on the physical chase but misses opportunities to explore Ella's thoughts and feelings during this difficult journey. When you write "For a moment she considered turning back," this is your only glimpse into her mind during the entire pursuit. What fears ran through her head in the dark forest? Did she doubt herself? Was she angry at

the bird, at herself, or scared? Without these internal moments, Ella feels like she's simply going through motions rather than experiencing genuine struggle.

Exemplar: *"For a moment she considered turning back—her wet clothes clung uncomfortably, and the forest seemed endless. What if the pendant was already lost forever? But then she remembered Grandma's weathered hands, how they'd trembled as they'd fastened the clasp, and Ella pushed forward."*

#3: Resolution (final paragraph)

Strengths:

- The circular structure of returning home creates a satisfying sense of completion.
- The transformation of the forest from menacing to pleasant shows Ella's changed perspective.

Rushed Emotional Resolution → After all the build-up, your ending wraps everything up too quickly and neatly. When you write "she had earned its blessing all over again," this feels like you're simply stating the lesson rather than letting readers experience Ella's growth. The entire final paragraph summarises what happened instead of showing a meaningful moment of realisation. What specific thought or feeling proved she'd changed? How did touching the pendant feel different now compared to before she lost it?

Exemplar: *"She touched the star-engraved circle, and this time, she didn't need its weight to feel brave—the courage had been inside her all along, proven in every bramble she'd pushed through, every fear she'd conquered. The pendant was simply a reminder of what she'd always possessed."*

■ Your piece tells an engaging adventure story with clear structure and good pacing, but it would benefit greatly from deeper emotional development. Right now, your writing focuses on what happens (the plot) rather than why it matters (the meaning). You've created a framework of a meaningful story, but haven't filled it with the emotional weight that would make readers truly feel Ella's journey.

To improve the substance of your writing, focus on showing Ella's internal world. When she's searching for the pendant, let us hear her panicked thoughts. When she's in the forest, show us her fears competing with her determination. Additionally, slow down at crucial emotional moments instead of rushing through them. Your fourth paragraph, where Ella reaches into the log, could be expanded to show her fear, her self-doubt, and her decision to be brave despite those feelings.

Also, consider adding small, specific details that make the pendant's importance concrete rather than abstract. Instead of telling us it represents courage, show us a memory of when it helped her before. Furthermore, your resolution would be stronger if you showed Ella's realisation through action or dialogue rather than simply stating "she had earned its blessing." Perhaps she could encounter a small challenge on the way home and react differently than she would have before, proving her growth through behaviour rather than summary.

Your descriptive writing is quite strong—phrases like "the grass glittered with dew" create vivid images—but your story needs the same attention to emotional detail that you've given to physical description.

Overall Score: 42/50

Section 2:

#1 When Ella awoke that morning, she knew something was wrong. The comforting weight of her silver pendant, the charm she had worn every day since her grandmother had given it to her, no longer rested against her neck. She leapt from bed, pulling open drawers, shaking her quilt, and even crouching to peer beneath the frame. The pendant was nowhere to be found. A hollow chill spread through her chest, for the charm had always been more than decoration; it was her talisman of courage, a small circle engraved with a star, a reminder that she was never truly alone.

#2 She hurried outside, checking ~~out~~ **[checking]** the garden where she had sat the night before. The grass glittered with dew, but no trace of silver caught the light. A rustling in the hedge startled her, and a magpie darted out, carrying a glint in its beak. Ella gasped and ran after it. ~~She was sure that it was the pendant.~~ **[The pendant—it had to be.]** Her slippers slapped against the stone path as she chased the bird beyond the gate and into the woods. Brambles tugged at her sleeves and thorns scratched her hands, yet she pressed forward, eyes locked on the bird's dark silhouette as it vanished deeper into the trees.

The forest grew darker, the very air heavy with damp earth and shadows. Strange sounds – creaks and whispers ~~echoed~~ **[echoing]** between the trunks, making Ella's heart hammer. At one point, she slipped into a freezing stream, the water soaking her clothes. For a moment she considered turning back, but the thought of losing the pendant pushed her on. Then, through a clearing, she spotted the magpie

perched on a branch above a hollow log. As Ella crept closer, the bird tilted its head, released the charm, and it tumbled into the darkness of the log.

#3 She dropped to her knees and reached inside. Her fingertips brushed smooth metal, but something scuttled over her hand. A hiss rose from within, and her stomach tightened ~~like the snake within~~ **[at the realisation of what lurked there]**. Summoning all her courage, she thrust her arm back into the log and pulled. The startled creature slid out, ~~curled~~ **[hissed]** angrily **[, and]** then coiled swiftly into the undergrowth. In her other hand, gleaming faintly in the dim light, was the pendant. Relief washed over her in a wave so strong it nearly brought her to tears.

With the charm once again secured around her neck, Ella retraced her steps home. The forest no longer seemed menacing; birds sang above and the path appeared brighter, as though the trees themselves approved of her bravery. By the time she reached her gate, the morning sun had broken fully through the clouds. She touched the star-engraved circle and smiled. The pendant had not simply been lost and found; it had tested her courage, and in overcoming the challenge, Ella felt she had earned its blessing all over again.