

Section 1

#1: "I dug through the dusty pile of dilapidated objects. The medley of items contained old books, out-of-ink pens, a khaki army hat and scrunched paper."

Strengths:

- Your opening creates immediate curiosity by placing readers directly into an action of discovery
- The specific details (khaki army hat, out-of-ink pens) paint a vivid picture of forgotten objects

Vague time transitions → Your piece jumps between time periods without clear signals to help readers follow along. The phrase "83 years ago" appears suddenly after the opening paragraph, and then "83 years ago 1 hour previous" creates confusion about whether we're moving forwards or backwards in time. Consider using smoother transitions such as adding a line break or a clearer phrase like "In that same moment, decades earlier..." to guide your readers through the time shifts.

Exemplar: The photograph transported me back eighty-three years, to a moment when my great grandmother...

#2: "At the military base, navy-uniformed officers darted through the hallways. I drew out a diagram of our little island and handed it to the administrator."

Strengths:

- You effectively show your great grandmother's important work at the military base
- The action verbs (darted, drew out, handed) keep the scene moving

Underdeveloped character moment → This section tells us what's happening but doesn't let us feel the weight of the moment. Your great grandmother is doing critical work the day before Pearl Harbor, but we don't sense her thoughts, feelings, or the tension in the air. Adding sensory details or internal thoughts would strengthen this scene. What did the base smell like? Was there unusual urgency in the air? Did her hands shake as she handed over the diagram?

Exemplar: My fingers trembled slightly as I handed the diagram to the administrator, though I couldn't explain the unease settling in my chest.

#3: "I filled a glass with what looked like five hundred year old tea and placed it on Great Grandma's bedside table."

Strengths:

- The humorous exaggeration about "five hundred year old tea" adds personality to your narrator's voice

- This scene establishes the present-day relationship between Silvia and her great grandmother

Missing emotional connection → The discovery of the medicine dosage error happens too quickly, and we don't fully understand Silvia's feelings about accidentally causing harm to her great grandmother. Your writing states "My heart skipped two beats" but doesn't explore the guilt, panic, or horror Silvia must feel. This is a turning point in your story that needs more emotional depth. Show us Silvia's racing thoughts or physical reactions to make this moment more powerful.

Exemplar: *My hands went numb. The box slipped from my fingers. Half a glass—I'd given her a full glass. What had I done?*

■ Your piece tackles an ambitious structure by weaving together past and present, which shows creative thinking. However, the story's emotional impact gets lost in the time jumps because readers need more grounding in each scene. The connection between discovering the photograph and the medicine mistake feels accidental rather than meaningful—think about how these two plot threads could strengthen each other. Your ending arrives abruptly; we need to see Silvia's grief and guilt more fully after realising her mistake cost her great grandmother's life. Additionally, the historical Pearl Harbor section needs more sensory details and emotional truth. Rather than telling us Great Grandma "cried herself to sleep," show us her trembling hands, her inability to stop seeing Joe's face, or the ash falling like snow outside her window. Focus on slowing down your most important moments and cutting unnecessary time stamps that interrupt the flow.

Overall Score: 42/50

Section 2

Today

I dug through the dusty pile of dilapidated objects. The medley of items contained old books, out-of-ink pens, a khaki army hat and crumpled paper. My delicate hands slowly unfolded it before my brain allowed them. A browned photograph of a young, lanky woman, with pale eyes just like mine, was displayed in my hand. The armchair she was seated in had the same circular pattern as the chair in our living room. On the back, written in small, messy handwriting, said [it said]: Pearl Harbour [Harbor] December 6th 1941.

#1 83 years ago

I trudged into the warm room and threw my coat onto the hearthrug. My fingers throbbed. I reached down to my round belly.

83 years ago, 1 hour previous

#2 At the military base, navy-uniformed officers darted through the hallways. I drew out a diagram of our little island and handed it to the administrator. With a rough grunt, he marched out of the room. I deciphered one last code from a foreign agency and stepped out the door.

Today

No.

It couldn't be.

My great grandmother, an army accountant?

No way.

I stared down at the words scribbled in black ink. Did the pregnant girl in the picture know that in less than twenty-four hours, her beloved home would be destroyed? Water dripped down my face. Her happy expression shone out of the layers of dust. Would she and her yet to be born child, meet the same fate as dozens of others?

A painful lump rose in my throat. I ~~visualized~~ [visualised] the heaps of bodies lying on the muddy ground. My mum always used to tell me bedtime stories about war. Had she known about this photo? My eyes reddened. If only I ~~found~~ [had found] this photo sooner, Mum would have still been alive.

83 years ago

"Joe! Can you take a photo of me sitting next to the fire? I've loved that armchair since I was a kid."

"Coming!"

Today

#3 I filled a glass with what looked like five hundred year old tea and placed it on Great Grandma's bedside table.

"Great Grandma, I have your medicine!"

A skinny, light-skinned female ambled in. She looked as though she was just skin and bone.

"Thank you, Silvia." [,"] she croaked. Draining the glass, the elderly woman dropped onto her pull-out bed and turned on the TV.

83 years ago—[,] ~~The next~~ [the next] day

I woke to the sound of shrieks and screams. I shouted for my husband, but no sound came. I quickly pulled on my fluffy dressing gown and ran onto the streets. I looked onto the shore. Warships. Stray shells flew through the air. Civilians sprinted around the road, crying for family members and friends. I suddenly glimpsed Joe, lying motionless on the ground. Dead.

"No. N[no no no no no no. This isn't happening!" I rasped, my voice creaking. I blinked a tear away and ran.

I cried myself to sleep tonight...

Today

An odd sort of groan rang out of the living room. I sprang down the stairs, and nearly bumped headlong into my great grandmother.

"Oh, thank heavens you're 'ere Silvia. I have the worst stomach ache. It's not usually this bad. The medication-"

I dashed to the table and raised the medicine box to eye-level. ~~Only take half a glass of this medicine or there will be fatal side effects.~~ I[Only take half a glass of this medicine or there will be fatal side effects. My] heart skipped two beats.

When I rubbed my eyes open, I saw Great Grandma lying on her red pull-out bed. I asked abruptly, "Did you live in Pearl Harbour and survive the bombing?" She smiled, the wrinkles around her mouth disappearing. For the first time, she looked like the lady in the photo. She sighed, "Yes. I still remember that day your grandfather died." I looked into her pale eyes, the ones just like mine.

"I'm sorry. I shouldn't have-" I mumbled. My eyes burned.

"No, no it's quite alright. I was going to die anyway. Goodbye Silvia, I love you."

"Thanks"

I watched her take her last breath, and blinked a tear away.