

Section 1:

#1: Opening discovery scene (first paragraph)

Strengths:

- Your use of physical details like "cold, smooth loose tile" creates a clear picture that helps readers imagine Annie's discovery.
- The pacing builds curiosity effectively, moving from the tile to the envelope to the letter inside.

Lack of sensory depth and emotional response → While you describe Annie's trembling hands, the scene would be stronger if you showed us more about what Annie is thinking or feeling during this important moment. Why is she removing the tile in the first place? What makes her hands tremble—is it excitement, fear, or something else? The phrase "Before she knew it" makes the action feel automatic rather than meaningful. Consider adding Annie's thoughts or a reason for her actions. You might also describe the setting more fully—where is Annie? Is she in an attic, a basement, or somewhere else?

Exemplar: Annie's hand rested on the cold, smooth loose tile that had always seemed slightly out of place. Curiosity overcame her as her fingers latched onto the bottom edge and carefully lifted it aside.

#2: Elizabeth's wartime experience (1942 section, first paragraph)

Strengths:

- The image of "smoke drifted to the sky like serpents" is creative and helps readers picture the destruction.
- You establish the danger quickly with the explosion and show Elizabeth's protective instinct towards her child.

Missing character development and unclear timeline → Elizabeth's section moves very quickly from the explosion to hiding in the forest to returning to the village, but we don't learn much about her as a person or understand how much time has passed. The phrase "Elizabeth stayed in the forest for a few days" tells us what happened but doesn't show us the experience. What did Elizabeth and her daughter eat? How did they feel? Were they frightened or determined? Additionally, you refer to "her child" but then suddenly use the name "Celine" later, which can confuse readers. Introducing Celine's name earlier would help.

Exemplar: Elizabeth grabbed her daughter Celine's hand and ran from the house as explosions thundered around them. In the forest, they huddled together for three cold, hungry days, Elizabeth whispering reassurances whilst her mind filled with worry for Henry.

#3: Henry's death scene (final paragraphs about Henry)

Strengths:

- The detail about Henry being trampled ("feet stomped onto his back") makes the chaos of battle feel real.
- Your ending creates an emotional connection back to the promise Henry made to Elizabeth.

Rushed and unclear final moments → Henry's death happens very suddenly, and important details are missing or confusing. The sentence "Henry felt a sharp pain sear through his back" suggests he was stabbed or shot, but you don't clearly explain what happened or who attacked him. Then the phrase "As Henry fell, the sun came up" connects two events that don't seem related—why does the sunrise matter at this moment? The ending also uses vague phrases like "Voices in his head called his name over and over" without explaining whose voices or why he hears them. These unclear details make it difficult for readers to fully understand and feel the sadness of Henry's final moments.

Exemplar: *An enemy soldier appeared behind him, and Henry felt a blade pierce through his back. As he collapsed to the muddy ground, his vision darkened. Elizabeth's face filled his mind, and he whispered, "I broke my promise," before his eyes closed forever.*

■ Your writing tackles an ambitious story that connects past and present through Annie's discovery of her great-grandfather's letter. The historical setting of World War II gives your piece emotional weight, and the circular structure—beginning with Annie and ending with the broken promise—works well. However, your story would benefit from slowing down and adding more detail to help readers connect with your characters. Additionally, several paragraphs would be stronger if you developed the emotions and experiences more fully rather than simply stating what happened. For instance, when Elizabeth returns to find her village destroyed, you could describe her reaction, her fears for the future, or specific details about the ruined buildings. This would help readers feel the loss alongside her. Also, consider explaining the connection between Annie and Elizabeth more clearly—is Elizabeth Annie's grandmother, and if so, how does Annie know this story?

Score: 42/50

Section 2:

#1 Annie's hand rested on the cold, smooth loose tile. Her fingers latched onto the bottom of the tile. Before she knew it, she had placed the tile beside her, and her eyes were locked on the faded yellow envelope with a red wax stamp under the tile. Her hands trembled as she reached for the envelope. Annie opened the delicate envelope and took out the frayed letter. Annie's eyes blurred as she read the words:

My dearest Elizabeth,

If you are reading this, please forgive me. I broke my promise. I did not come home. I did not make it through. Forgive me.

Annie then remembered the story her grandmother told her.

1942

#2 Elizabeth sat in the cold, damp room as her child pranced around her. Suddenly, a large explosion shook the ground. Elizabeth grabbed her child and ran out of the house. Explosions sounded all around them. Elizabeth ducked for cover in the ~~forests~~[forest] and prayed that her husband, Henry, would be safe. He had promised the day he went to war, that he would come back to her and his daughter. Elizabeth stayed in the forest for a few days before returning to the village. The once village with ~~colourful~~[colourful] buildings scattered around was a ~~smoldering~~[a smouldering] ash pit. Smoke drifted to the sky like serpents.

#3 Henry sat in the dirt-covered trenches. Mud covered him head to toe. He wondered what Elizabeth and Celine, his daughter, were doing right now. He hoped that their situation was a lot better than his. He stared into the distance, eyes[his eyes] trying to detect movement. He sighed with relief when he found none. Just as he closed his eyes, a bullet broke the silence. The battlefield erupted into chaos. Blood splatted[splattered] everywhere. Henry loaded his gun and fired. He loaded, then fired. Soon the enemy was retreating, but then the commander gave the order to charge. Henry clambered up the muddy steps and chased after the opposing army. Then he made the fatal mistake. He tripped and fell. Henry tried getting up again, but feet stomped onto his back. Henry groaned as he finally got up. He was too busy rubbing his back to notice an approaching man. Henry felt a sharp pain sear through his back.

As Henry fell, the sun came up. Henry's eyes started closing. Voices in his head called his name over and over. Henry's eyes shut before he remembered.

"I broke my promise.[,]" Henry managed to mumble before closing his eyes and never opening them ever again.