

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph "The photograph had always hung like a crooked bat on the dusty wall of the hallway. A young boy, no older than 7, was crouched in the center, his arm slung over Dan, A cow covered with a mosaic of brown and white."

Strengths:

- Your opening simile comparing the photograph to "a crooked bat" creates an immediate visual image that captures the neglected state of the house.
- The description of Dan as having "a mosaic of brown and white" shows thoughtful word choice that paints a clear picture.

Unclear narrative positioning → Your piece begins in the present day with Alaita looking at the photograph, but the reader doesn't understand who Alaita is or her relationship to James until much later in the story. This makes the opening confusing. When you write "A young boy, no older than 7," we don't know if this is James as a child or someone else entirely. The phrase "This was the only thing left in the house" raises questions that aren't answered until the flashback section.

Exemplar: *"The photograph had always hung like a crooked bat on the dusty wall of the hallway. Alaita paused before it, studying the image of her younger brother James—no older than seven—crouched with his arm slung over Dan, a cow covered with a mosaic of brown and white."*

#2: Flashback transition and tornado sequence "3 years earlier. It was October 12, 2014, and James called out to me. 'Al, come over here and take a photo for me', he called."

Strengths:

- Your shift to first-person perspective in the flashback ("called out to me") helps readers understand that Alaita is narrating this memory.
- The specific date adds authenticity to the memory.

Abrupt and underdeveloped action sequence → The tornado scene moves too quickly from thunder to James's death without building tension or showing why he rushed out despite obvious danger. The phrase "A tornado in the distance, had forged a path and now made a beeline towards the house" appears suddenly without warning signs. You write "James fell to his knees. At that same moment, so did Alaita," but don't explain why they both fell or what this moment represents. The description "his last screams etched in a tapestry on his face" is confusing because screams can't be etched on a face.

Exemplar: *"Thunder cracked overhead, and through the kitchen window, I spotted the dark funnel forming in the distance. The cows' frightened bellowing filled the air. Before I could stop him, James had grabbed his raincoat and was racing towards the paddock where Dan stood frozen with fear."*

#3: Final paragraph"A Week Later. Alaita unzipped her suitcase. They had moved to their large block in the city. She opened a special box she personally put in there. She opened it, and her two memories stared up at her."

Strengths:

- Your ending brings the story full circle by returning to the photograph and camera.

Vague and unresolved conclusion → The ending tells us what happens but doesn't show Alaita's emotional response or give the story a meaningful sense of closure. When you write "her two memories stared up at her," we can assume you mean the photograph and camera, but this feels distant and unclear. The phrase "their large block in the city" is mentioned without any reflection on how different this new life is from the farm, missing an opportunity to show how much Alaita has lost.

Exemplar: *"A week later, Alaita knelt beside her unpacked suitcase in the cramped city flat. She lifted out the special box and opened it carefully. The photograph and camera lay nestled inside—all that remained of the farm, of James, of the life they'd shared before that terrible October day."*

■ Your piece tells an emotional story about loss and memory, but it needs more development to help readers fully understand and feel Alaita's grief. The relationship between Alaita and James lacks clarity—readers need to know earlier that they're siblings and what their bond meant to each other. Additionally, your story would benefit from slowing down during the tornado sequence to build suspense and show James's character more clearly. Why did he risk his life for a cow? What does this say about who he was? Also, consider adding more sensory details throughout—what did the farm smell like? What sounds filled the house before and after James's death? These details will make your writing more vivid and help readers connect emotionally with Alaita's loss. Finally, your ending needs stronger reflection from Alaita about what these memories mean to her now and how she'll carry James's memory forward in her new life.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2:

The Photograph

#1 → The photograph had always hung like a crooked bat on the dusty wall of the hallway. A young boy, no older than 7 [seven], was crouched in the ~~center~~ [centre], his arm slung over Dan, ~~A~~ [a] cow covered with a mosaic of brown and white. In the background, a wheat farm lay, its stalks standing straight and tall like valiant soldiers. Alaita stood with her backpack and suitcase. This was the only thing left in the house. She straightened her glasses and looked at the photograph. The house was silent. This was the first

time the house had been quiet ever since the passing of James. She reached up and stretched to bring down the framed image. Dust lingered in the air dancing and leaping with purposeless excitement. She smelt the wood. It had a slight smell of lavender, and the old antique smell that libraries have in their archives. Dan, the cow, had died first. James had passed a mere 23 minutes after. ~~It was taken, just before the chaos struck.~~ [The photograph had been taken just before the chaos struck.]

3 years earlier

#2 → It was October 12, 2014, and James called out to me. "Al, come over here and take a photo for me", he called. Constantly, he pleaded for an image and, after an unending argument, she gave up. ~~In resistance~~ [Reluctantly], Alaita grabbed her camera. ~~And~~ [She] took a photo of James with his arm slung over his greatest friend, Dan. A few hours later, thunder struck. The ~~cows, screeching~~ [cows' screeching] calls of pain and misery were heard by all, but none chose to save the poor cow, except for James. He grabbed a raincoat and umbrella and rushed out into the storm. A tornado in the distance had forged a path and now made a beeline towards the house. James fell to his knees. At that same moment, so did Alaita. She stared as the demon of wind and rubble smashed down the trees in its way, tracking James the whole way. After a relentless chase, he passed away, his last screams etched in a tapestry on his face.

Present day

She stared at the sky, flocks of birds drifting on the breeze, wind flowing under their feathery wings. She had slipped that photo into her favourite frame herself. The thought of him let free a watery tear, held back by years of mourning. She looked at her camera. It was old now, yet it served as a memento of the time she had with James. Their farm was about to be sold, their new house deep in the city. The loud calls of bids from the loud auction echoed in her ears. She looked down at the ~~thing~~ [objects] in her hands and clutched them to her chest. She would never forget James, for his bravery that led to his demise.

A Week Later

#3 → Alaita unzipped her suitcase. They had moved to their large block in the city. She opened a special box she ~~personally put~~ [had personally placed] in there. She opened it, and her two memories stared up at her.