

Section 1

#1: "I doubted the parcel was for me the second I spotted my mother's gothic cursive writing dancing on the parchment cover. She had been dead for 1 year now, which made receiving a parcel from her either a miracle, or a clerical error."

Strengths:

- Your opening immediately hooks the reader with mystery and emotion
- You clearly establish the impossible situation (receiving mail from someone who died)

Incomplete sensory detail → While you tell us about "gothic cursive writing dancing," you focus mostly on what the narrator sees. Your piece would feel more alive if you showed us what the parcel felt like in the narrator's hands, or whether it had a particular smell. When you write "I placed the package on top of a few worksheets and books," you're telling us an action but not helping us experience the moment. Think about adding details like: was the parcel heavy or light? Did the parchment crackle? These small touches help readers feel like they're standing right there with your character.

Exemplar: *The parcel felt surprisingly heavy in my trembling hands, and the parchment crackled softly as I turned it over, revealing my mother's gothic cursive writing dancing across the cover—writing I hadn't seen in a year, not since she died.*

#2: "With a sigh, I sat on a croaky stool, staring at the parcel for 36 minutes while the clock tick-tocked in the background. Lost in wonder and thought, I pondered what was inside. Suddenly, my fear dissolved and excitement took over, so I roughly tore it apart, leaving the parchment paper flying around like confetti."

Strengths:

- You show the narrator's hesitation through the specific detail of "36 minutes," which feels real
- The contrast between careful waiting and sudden tearing creates good tension

Rushed emotional shift → Your character sits frozen for 36 minutes, but then the change from fear to excitement happens in just one word: "Suddenly." This makes the shift feel too quick and unexplained. What specific thought or feeling made the fear disappear? Did she remember something

about her mother? Did she decide she had to know? When you write "my fear dissolved and excitement took over," you're naming the emotions but not showing us the process of change. Your readers need to understand why this moment was the turning point.

Exemplar: *After 36 minutes of staring at the parcel while the clock tick-tocked, a memory surfaced—my mother always said I worried too much. The thought made me smile, and suddenly my fear melted into excitement. I roughly tore the wrapping apart, leaving parchment paper flying around like confetti.*

#3: "The note read: 'For Amethyst, my dearest daughter, the map and the first copy of a book I think you will like. From now, it will be launched around the world. The map is of our times together when I was here with you. You were always glittering, no matter what happened. Take the map, and go to the ice-cream parlour. Order my ice-cream. – Love, Mum.' I never noticed the details she observed."

Strengths:

- The note reveals the mother's loving observations and gives the story a touching purpose
- You capture the mother's voice well through phrases like "you were always glittering"

Underdeveloped reaction → This note is the emotional heart of your story—it's a final message from a dead mother to her daughter—but Amethyst's reaction is only one short sentence: "I never noticed the details she observed." After sitting frozen for 36 minutes before opening the parcel, surely reading her mother's words would create a bigger emotional moment? You don't show us if she cried, smiled, laughed, or felt surprised. When you write "memories came flooding back," that's closer to showing emotion, but it comes after you've moved on to describing the map again. Your readers need to see Amethyst feeling this moment before you continue with the plot.

Exemplar: *I never noticed the details she observed. My eyes blurred with tears as I read her words again—"you were always glittering"—and for the first time since she died, I felt her presence, as if she were sitting right beside me at this messy table.*

■ Your piece tells an emotionally powerful story about a daughter receiving one last gift from her mother, and you've chosen wonderful specific details like the "gothic cursive writing" and the map's creative place names. The structure of your narrative works well, moving from mystery to discovery to

reflection. However, your writing would become much stronger if you slowed down at the most important emotional moments. Right now, you tend to name feelings ("fear dissolved and excitement took over," "I was still enjoying her map") instead of showing us what those feelings look like through actions, thoughts, and physical sensations.

Additionally, your piece would benefit from more sensory details throughout. You mention visual things like "parchment paper flying around like confetti," but what did Amethyst hear, smell, or feel? When she opens the chest box, does it make a sound? Does the old map smell like her mother's house? These details make fictional worlds feel real.

The paragraph about inheriting your mother's features feels disconnected from the rest of the story—it interrupts the flow of opening the parcel. Consider whether this information needs to be there, or if it could be woven in more naturally later. Also, the transition in your final paragraph ("The clouds faded away; flowers bloomed") is confusing because we don't know if this is literal (did weather actually change?) or metaphorical (is this describing her mood?). Making this clearer would strengthen your ending and help readers understand exactly how Amethyst feels about this gift from her mother.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2:

~~I doubted~~ [I doubted that] the parcel was for me the second I spotted my mother's gothic cursive writing dancing on the parchment cover. She had been dead for ~~1 year~~ [one year] now, which made receiving a parcel from her either a miracle or a clerical error. I was not the sort of person who came across miracles. I was the sort of woman whose papers, old receipts~~and~~ [and] books read months ago lay strewn, spilled [and spilled] all over the kitchen table.

#1 I placed the package on top of a few worksheets and books. With a sigh, I sat on a ~~croaky~~ [creaky] stool, staring at the parcel for ~~36~~ [thirty-six] minutes whilst the clock tick-tocked in the background. Lost in wonder and thought, I pondered what was inside. Suddenly, my fear dissolved and excitement took over, so I roughly tore it apart, leaving the parchment paper flying around like confetti. My mother would ~~disapprove~~ [have disapproved], and would ~~get~~ [have got] a butterknife, carefully ~~slit~~ [slit] open the tape and ~~unwrap~~ [unwrapped] it cautiously, leaving the parchment paper intact at the end of unwrapping.

#2 I inherited my mum's sleek eyebrows and her silky black hair which drooped to my hips. But I didn't inherit her ~~ever-lasting~~ [everlasting] gloom, her love for moody black, ~~her~~ [or her] longing to be something other than a human [—] a vampire.

Exhilarated, I ripped the packaging open and there was a chest box with the words OPEN ME etched on messily. Hesitantly, I creaked it open. Inside, there was a note, a dry yellowing map crinkled with scarred edges ~~and~~ [and] a new book with a spooky silhouette standing under a full moon on its cover. I probably would never read the book.

I opened the map first. It was a map of our town. It wasn't your ordinary map like on your phone [—] it was a dark, mysterious map with an eerie snake slithering around the compass, twisted, with each place in town named something else. The park where she used to push me down a slide, acting like she was unhappy and ~~claimed~~ [claiming] I enjoyed it too much ~~was~~ [, was] named 'A land of much light'; [;] my primary school where no matter what she had on, ~~always went to~~ [she always went to] each event '~~A sanctuary~~ [was labelled 'A sanctuary] where darkness secretly dawns'. I grinned. Even though my mother was the complete opposite of me, I was still enjoying her map as much as I enjoyed going to the ice-cream parlour when I was six. At the bottom, in her ~~flow-y~~ [flowing] handwriting, read 'go read the note'. So I did.

#3 The note read: 'For Amethyst, my dearest daughter, the map and the first copy of a book I think you will like. From now, it will be launched around the world. The map is of our times together when I was here with you. You were always glittering, no matter what happened. Take the map, and go to the ice-cream parlour. Order my ice-cream. – Love, Mum.' I never noticed the details she observed. How my school had a random statue of the principal hidden amongst trees, how the ice-cream parlour always had —always, no matter what [—] an odd number of people. ~~Looking~~ [Looking at] the map, memories came flooding back from our fun times together when I was younger.

The clouds faded away; flowers bloomed; I smiled at the box, map, note and book, knowing I would keep them forever.