

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph (from "I thought the parcel" to "clerical error")

Strengths:

- Your opening hook immediately captures attention by presenting an intriguing mystery—receiving a parcel from someone who has passed away
- The phrase "gothic cursive writing dancing on the parchment" creates a vivid visual image that establishes atmosphere early

Inconsistent Narrator Voice → Your piece shifts between different ways of describing yourself. You write "I was not the sort of person who miracles would come across" but then add "There was a possibility of being one, just a 2/10 chance." This creates confusion because you're both dismissing and accepting the possibility at the same time. The sudden introduction of a specific number (2/10) feels out of place with the thoughtful, reflective tone you've established. It would be stronger to commit to one perspective and develop it fully.

Exemplar: *I was not the sort of person miracles visited. Life had taught me to expect the ordinary, even when envelopes arrived bearing impossible handwriting.*

#2: Middle section (from "I placed the package" to "permanent vampire teeth")

Strengths:

- The specific detail of sitting and staring at the parcel for "36 minutes" shows genuine hesitation and emotion
- Your contrast between yourself and your mother (the butterknife unwrapping versus your rough tearing) effectively reveals character differences

Overly Packed Paragraph → This section tries to accomplish too many things at once. You move from placing the package down, to describing your messy kitchen, to opening it, to explaining your mother's OCD, to listing physical features you inherited, to discussing her vampire obsession—all without clear breaks or smooth connections. The reader gets overwhelmed because each new idea

arrives before the previous one has room to breathe. When you write "My mother would disapprove – she had OCD," you jump into backstory that interrupts the present moment's tension.

Exemplar: *I tore the wrapping roughly, paper flying like confetti. Mum would have disapproved—she always used a butterknife, carefully preserving every fold. [New paragraph] We were different in most ways. I'd inherited her sleek eyebrows and silky black hair, but not her ever-lasting gloom or her fascination with vampires.*

#3: The map description (from "I opened the map first" to "ice-cream order")

Strengths:

- The renamed locations on the map ('A land of much light' for the park) create an imaginative, mysterious atmosphere
- Your comparison to enjoying ice cream at age six adds genuine emotional warmth

Unclear Significance → Your writing introduces interesting details about the map but doesn't help us understand why they matter. You mention the "eerie snake slithering around the compass" and the renamed places, but you don't show us what these details reveal about your relationship with your mother or what they mean to you emotionally. The ice cream reference "Blood orange, chocolate, cream" appears suddenly without explaining its importance until later. Readers need to understand the emotional weight of these details as they appear, not just that they exist.

Exemplar: *The park where Mum used to push me on swings was labelled 'A land of much light'—her way of remembering the place I'd always seemed happiest. Each renamed location held a memory she'd preserved in her own peculiar language.*

■ Your piece tells a touching story about discovering a final gift from your mother, and the emotional core is genuinely moving. The central idea—that your mother created a personalised map marking your shared memories—is creative and heartfelt. However, your writing would benefit from slowing down and giving each moment more space to develop. You're trying to include many details and backstory elements all at once, which makes some paragraphs feel crowded and rushed.

Consider reorganising your second paragraph by separating the action of opening the parcel from the backstory about your mother's personality. This would help readers stay focused on what's happening in the present moment before moving into memories. Additionally, your writing sometimes tells us information rather than showing us why it matters—for instance, instead of simply stating the map had an "eerie snake," you could describe how seeing that snake made you feel or what it reminded you of.

Your strongest moments occur when you focus on specific, concrete details like the "36 minutes" of staring or the butterknife unwrapping ritual. Look for opportunities to expand these kinds of precise observations throughout your piece. Also, the final paragraph contains several lovely moments of realisation, but phrases like "hwo the ice-cream parlour always had – always, no matter what, an odd number of people" feel underdeveloped. What does this odd detail mean to you? How did noticing it change your understanding of your mother? Answering these questions would add depth to your conclusion and help readers connect more deeply with your emotional journey.

Overall Score: 42/50

Section 2:

#1 I thought the parcel was not for me the second I spotted my mother's gothic cursive writing dancing on the parchment cover. She had been dead for ~~1~~ [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 miracles would come across. There was a possibility of being one, just a 2/10 chance.~~ [I was not the sort of person miracles visited—life had taught me to expect the ordinary, even when impossibilities arrived at my door.] I was the sort of woman whose papers, old receipts and books read months ago lay strewn ~~spilled~~ all over the kitchen table.

#2 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. 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~~ — she [have disapproved. She] had OCD and would get a ~~butterknife~~ [butter knife], carefully slit open the tape and unwrap it cautiously, leaving the parchment paper ~~in tact~~ [intact] at the end of unwrapping.

I inherited her sleek eyebrows and her silky black hair which drooped to my hips. But I didn't inherit her ever-lasting gloom, her love for moody black or her longing to be something other than a human; [—] a vampire. She even got permanent vampire teeth to show her dedication towards them.

~~Exhilarated~~ [Exhilarated], I ripped it 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 ~~with~~ scarred edges and a new book with a spooky silhouette standing under a full moon on its cover. I probably would never read it.

#3 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, [Twisted and strange,] with each place in town named something else. The park was named 'A land of much light'; [;] my primary school' [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 the ice-cream parlour when I was six. 'Blood orange, chocolate, cream'. That was her ice-cream order and the name of the ice-cream order. At the bottom, in her ~~flow-y~~ [flowing] handwriting, read 'go to the note'. So I did.

The note read: 'For Amethyst, my dearest daughter, the map and the first copy of a book. 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 did. How my school had a random statue of the principal hidden amongst trees, ~~two~~ [how] the ice-cream parlour always had – always, no matter what [—] an odd number of people. Looking ~~the~~ [at the] map, memories came flooding back. Clouds faded away; flowers bloomed; I smiled at the box, map, note and book.