

Section 1

#1: Opening Hook

From: "When I saw the crisp sunflower yellow envelope with my dead father's neat handwriting on the table, I should have known it was meant for me."

Strengths:

- Your opening immediately grabs attention by combining mystery (the envelope) with emotion (your dead father), making readers curious about what will happen next.
- The specific detail of "sunflower yellow" creates a vivid image and shows rather than tells.

Abrupt Tonal Shift → Your writing suddenly jumps from the serious discovery of your father's envelope to a casual reference about Binky the toy rabbit. The sentence "I believe in miracles like the time I found Binky my toy (I loved that rabbit) but this?" feels out of place because it interrupts the emotional weight of finding something from your deceased father. This makes readers confused about whether the story should feel deeply sad or lighthearted. The Binky reference doesn't connect clearly to the envelope discovery, so it weakens the impact of your opening.

Exemplar: *I should have known it was meant for me, though part of me couldn't believe he'd planned this before he died.*

#2: The Messy Room Description

From: "The pieces of the envelope lay shredded on the desolate floor adding to the pile of KFC boxes, soft drinks and the odd boot with its tip poking out."

Strengths:

- You include concrete details (KFC boxes, soft drinks, boots) that help readers picture the messy room clearly.

Unclear Purpose of Details → Your description of the messy floor doesn't connect to the emotional story about your father. Whilst the word "desolate" suggests loneliness, the specific items (KFC boxes and boots) don't tell us anything meaningful about your character or your grief. These details feel random rather than purposeful. Strong writing uses description to reveal character or mood, but here the mess just seems like a list of objects without deeper meaning. Consider: does this mess show how you've been coping with your father's death? Does it represent something about your relationship? Right now, it's just clutter that distracts from the more important emotional discovery.

Exemplar: *The torn pieces scattered across the floor, joining the mess I'd been too numb to clean since the funeral.*

#3: The Emotional Realisation

From: "All my life I had thought of my father as an old misery guts, but now I saw the world through his eyes, understanding how he had felt. I was a reminder to my mum. When he saw me, he felt sadness and depression."

Strengths:

- Your writing captures an important turning point where your character's understanding of his father completely changes.
- The phrase "saw the world through his eyes" effectively shows how the map helps you understand your father's perspective.

Rushed Emotional Development → Your realisation happens too quickly without showing us how you reached this understanding. You jump from "I thought he was a misery guts" straight to "I understood everything" in just two sentences. This is a huge emotional shift that needs more space to feel believable. You tell us "I was a reminder to my mum" but don't explain how the map showed you this. Did certain place names reveal this? Did the ink smudges or notes make this clear? Readers need to see the specific details from the map that led to your understanding, otherwise your character seems to magically know his father's feelings without evidence.

Exemplar: *I traced the route from The Stream of Joy to The Boulevard of Depression, and suddenly understood—every time Dad walked me to school, he passed the street where Mum died. Every single morning, he faced that pain, and I never knew.*

■ Your piece tells an emotionally powerful story about discovering a map from your deceased father, but it needs more development in several areas. The core idea—understanding your father through his map—is strong, but you rush through the emotional journey too quickly. Your writing would benefit from slowing down during key moments, especially when you're examining the map and realising how your father felt. Instead of telling us "I understood how he felt," show us the specific details that led to this understanding.

Additionally, your piece needs clearer connections between different parts. The Binky the rabbit reference feels disconnected from the rest of the story, and the description of your messy room doesn't add to the emotional impact. Think about whether each detail serves a purpose—does it reveal something about your character, your grief, or your relationship with your father? If not, consider removing it or making the connection clearer.

Also, your writing could explore the map itself in more depth. You mention several renamed locations, but you don't spend much time with each one. What other places did your father rename? What did his handwriting look like on different parts of the map? These details would help readers feel the same discovery you're experiencing. Your ending has genuine emotion, but the journey to get there needs more steps so readers can experience the realisation alongside you rather than being told about it after it's already happened.

Overall Score: 39/50

Section 2

#1 When I saw the crisp sunflower yellow envelope with my dead father's neat handwriting on the table, I should have known it was meant for me. ~~I believe in miracles like the time I found Binky my toy (I loved that rabbit) but this? This was straining it way too much.~~ [Yet seeing his handwriting

again—when I knew he was gone—felt impossible.] It was too much ~~for me~~ to wait. I ~~dived~~ [dived] onto it and ~~I~~ ripped it open. #2 The pieces of the envelope lay shredded on the desolate floor adding to the pile of KFC boxes, soft drinks and the odd boot with its tip poking out. But I ignored it. I was way too busy staring dumbfounded at the map I now held in my hands for once acting like my dad. This was a breakthrough I thought. The clean crisp paper was a map of our town but in my father's eyes. It had intricate drawings on it, little footnotes hastily ~~screwed~~ [scrawled] and an occasional ink smudge but otherwise it was beautiful. A dragon was coiled around the compass. The legend had swirls of waves around it and a dolphin jumping over it. Then I saw the pictures and the small titles underneath ~~it~~ [them]. The river where ~~mum~~ [Mum] had met ~~dad~~ [Dad] had become The Stream of Joy. The street where ~~mum~~ [Mum] died became The Boulevard of Depression. The school became The Academy of Doom. When I read the last one, I let out a bitter grin. At least we had something in common. #3 I traced the way from The Stream of Joy to The Academy of Doom almost absent-mindedly, thinking of the way I went, laughing and joking with my friends. All my life I had thought of my father as an old misery guts, but now I saw the world through his eyes, understanding how he had felt. I was a reminder to my ~~mum~~ [Mum]. When he saw me, he felt sadness and depression. Then I saw a group of letters inscribed below an ink smudge. It was an apology. I felt tears come to my eyes when ~~my dad~~ [I read that Dad had] signed at the end, "~~To my son~~" [writing "To my son,"] and that his last wish was for me to be happy. I now understood how he felt. I would cherish his final gift[—]The gift of hope.