

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph (first paragraph)

Strengths:

- Your opening hook immediately grabs attention with an intriguing mystery—receiving a letter from your deceased mother creates suspense that makes readers want to continue.
- The narrator's personality comes through clearly through specific details like reading the dictionary carefully and arranging books alphabetically, which helps readers understand the character quickly.

Tense inconsistency → Your writing shifts between past and present tense in confusing ways. You write "I should have known" (past) but then "She had been dead for 7 and 13 days" (also past, but the timeframe is unclear—is it 7 days or 13 days?). Later you use "I'm not the sort" (present tense) when describing yourself. This mixing of tenses makes it difficult for readers to understand when events are happening. Stay in one main tense throughout your story—if you're telling something that already happened, use past tense consistently.

Exemplar: *She had been dead for thirteen days, which made receiving a letter from her either a miracle or a clerical error.*

#2: Second paragraph

Strengths:

- The contrast between the narrator and the mother is shown well through actions—you describe how your mother would have "torn it open immediately" whilst you waited and counted how many times you walked past it.
- The specific detail of walking past the parcel "seventeen times" reinforces the narrator's careful, counting personality established earlier.

Unnecessary detail clutter → You include too many small details that don't add meaning to your story. Phrases like "I've counted" and "I couldn't find the butter ones" interrupt the flow of your narrative. Whilst some specific details strengthen your character (like the seventeen times), others feel like you're adding information just to add it. The mention of not finding butter knives doesn't connect

to the character's personality or move the story forward—it just distracts readers from the important moment of opening the parcel. Choose details that reveal something important about your character or setting, and leave out details that are simply factual.

Exemplar: *When I finally slit the tape with a pocketknife, I found a map.*

#3: Description of the map (third paragraph)

Strengths:

- Your sensory details bring the map to life—mentioning the "vague cocoa scent" of the rose and the visual details of turquoise basilisks helps readers imagine the map clearly.

Run-on sentence structure → Your sentences become too long and packed with multiple descriptions joined together. The sentence beginning with "The hemming was embedded..." continues with "two turquoise basilisks intertwining" all in one breath, making it hard to follow. Similarly, "The compass rose – which had a literal rose, that hadn't decayed – was ethereal" tries to include too many ideas at once. Breaking these into shorter, clearer sentences would help each beautiful detail stand out rather than blurring together. Long sentences can work well, but yours lose clarity because they chain together too many different observations.

Exemplar: *The hemming was embedded with glints of gold and silver. Two turquoise basilisks intertwined through the yellowish parchment. The compass rose held a literal rose that hadn't decayed—ethereal, with shades of velvety maroon.*

■ Your piece shows a creative imagination, particularly in how you've transformed ordinary town locations into magical names like "The Cage of Curriculum" and "The Splash Sanctuary." This reimagining of the world through the mother's eyes is the strongest part of your writing. However, your narrative would benefit from deeper exploration of emotions. You tell us the narrator "faintly smiled" but don't show us what this discovery truly means to her—does finding this map change how she sees her mother? Does it make her sad, curious, or regretful?

Additionally, your fourth paragraph needs expansion. You rush through the revelation that the mother saw the world differently, but this is the heart of your story. Take time here to explore what the narrator thinks and feels about discovering her mother noticed "every single little detail" whilst she walked the

same path 107 times without seeing. What does this make her wonder about? Does she wish she'd paid more attention? Does she want to see the world the way her mother did?

Also, your ending feels abrupt. After building up this mysterious map and the contrast between mother and daughter, you stop suddenly. Consider adding a paragraph that shows what the narrator decides to do next—will she follow the map? Will she try to see the world differently? Finally, reconsider whether all your number-counting adds to the story. Whilst "seventeen times" and "107 times" show the character's personality, having numbers in nearly every paragraph becomes repetitive rather than meaningful.

Overall Score: 41/50

Section 2:

#1 I should have known the parcel wasn't for me the moment I spotted my mother's cursive signature flowing on the parchment cover. She had been dead for ~~7 and 13~~ [thirteen] days, which made receiving a letter from her either a miracle or ~~clerical~~ [a clerical] error. I'm not the sort of person lots of miracles happen to. I mean, it's a possibility, just not what I would say is very likely. I'm the sort who likes to read each word in the dictionary VERY carefully ~~along with~~ [, alongside] checking expiry dates and making sure my books on the bookshelf are ~~aligned~~ [arranged] in precise alphabetical order.

The ~~package~~ [#2 parcel] had been lying on the marble ~~countertop~~ [benchtop] for ~~2~~ [two] days. I've walked past it seventeen times—I've counted—before finally opening it. My mother would have torn it open immediately, scattering the parchment and messily tied bow ~~in the middle~~ [everywhere] like confetti, swooning over whatever things that lay in its wake. I am not my mother. I inherited her dimples and her inability to whistle, but not her spontaneous joy.

When I finally slit the tape with a pocketknife (I couldn't find the butter ones), I found a map. Not the regular ones that you buy from a store [shop] or the ones on your iPhone. It was a handdrawn [hand-drawn] map, with its edges crumbling like old bread, the ink faded but still whispering secrets. ~~The hemming was embedded with glints of gold and silver, two turquoise basilisks intertwining through the yellowish page of parchment. The compass rose = which had a literal rose, that hadn't decayed = was ethereal, shades of velvety maroon jumping at your eyes with a vague cocoa scent.~~ [#3 The hemming was embedded with glints of gold and silver. Two turquoise basilisks intertwined

through the yellowish parchment. The compass rose—which held a literal rose that hadn't decayed—was ethereal, with shades of velvety maroon that seemed to leap from the page, carrying a vague cocoa scent.] Ferns curled in the corners beside mountains shaped like sleeping beasts.

It was the map of our town-[—]the one both my mother and I had shared a childhood in. But not the one that co- existed [coexisted]. The one that existed in my mother's eyes.[,] With [with] savage titles at [for] the school'The [like 'The] Cage of Curriculum'~~but~~ [, but] magical headings for the lake like 'The Splash Sanctuary'. I faintly smiled. Seems like my mother didn't think the world was sunshines and rainbows after all. Each place that I only imagined as their proper name had become rethought, reimagined, rewritten, in a multiverse.

At the bottom, in her runny letters~~read~~ [, it read]-[:] 'For Amelia. This is the real town[:] the one you see is just an illusion, the cover. Love, your mother.'

I traced the rich ink of the roads, following it from 'Home Sweet Home' to the 'Splash Sanctuary'. I'd walked there 107 times- [—]I always kept track- [—]not even noticing that the sunflowers bloomed in different directions or the flying squirrels that flew around at dusk. My mother had ~~saw~~ [seen] it. She'd seen every single little detail.