

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph (from "The moment I saw..." to "...a clerical error.")

Strengths:

- Your opening hook immediately grabs attention by combining the familiar (mother's handwriting) with the impossible (she's been dead for 6 months), creating strong intrigue
- The narrator's voice feels authentic and relatable through specific details like "squint through my glasses to check for expiration dates"

Overly abrupt character contradiction → You establish the narrator as someone who doesn't believe in miracles and checks expiration dates carefully, but then immediately dismiss the mysterious package as "probably just a clerical error" without any real thought process. This feels too quick and doesn't match the careful, detail-oriented personality you've just shown us. The character would likely examine the package more closely, check the postmark, or at least spend more time considering the impossibility before brushing it off.

Exemplar: *"I turned the package over in my hands, checking the postmark, the postal stamp, even the tape sealing it shut. Everything looked ordinary. But ordinary things don't arrive from dead people. Still, I set it down on the kitchen bench. It was probably just a clerical error—some old package that got lost in the system."*

#2: Second paragraph (from "The package sat..." to "...But just physically.")

Strengths:

- The specific detail of "17 times I walked past it" shows the narrator's personality perfectly—someone who counts and notices exact numbers
- The contrast between the narrator and her mother is established through vivid, memorable examples (shouting at birds, making barking sounds at dogs)

Unclear visual description → When you write "I swear I could've seen my mother tearing open the sloppy brown package with her bare hands, shredding the pieces into confetti," it's confusing whether

this is a memory, an imagined vision, or something the narrator actually sees. The phrase "I could've seen" creates uncertainty about what's happening. Is this a ghost? A hallucination? A memory triggered by seeing the package? Your reader needs to understand what's real and what isn't in this moment.

Exemplar: *"Each time I walked past it, a memory flashed through my mind: my mother tearing open birthday packages with her bare hands, shredding the wrapping paper into confetti, laughing as the pieces fell around her."*

#3: Map description paragraph (from "But as I peered closer..." to "...smooth granite faces.")

Strengths:

- The sensory details bring the map to life—"coffee-stained," "felt like fabric," "smooth granite faces"—helping readers visualise this special object
- The description builds from general to specific, allowing readers to discover the map's details alongside the narrator

Missing emotional connection → You spend considerable time describing what the map looks like, but you don't tell us how the narrator feels whilst examining it. After two days of avoiding the package and given that the mother has been dead for exactly six months, the narrator would have strong emotions whilst holding something her mother created. Does her hand shake? Does her throat tighten? Does she feel excitement, fear, sadness, or confusion? Without these emotional reactions, the moment feels flat despite the beautiful description.

Exemplar: *"My hands trembled slightly as I held the thick, coffee-stained paper. It felt like fabric between my fingers, warm somehow, as if my mother had just finished drawing it. There were intricately drawn illustrations and a compass rose that looked somewhat like the one my mum pinned on her dress, and I had to blink hard to keep my eyes from watering."*

■ Your piece shows strong potential in creating an emotional story about grief and seeing the world differently. The central idea—that the mother left behind a map showing how she viewed their ordinary town as magical—is touching and original. However, you can strengthen your writing by slowing down at the important moments. Right now, you move quite quickly from discovery to discovery (finding the package, opening it, reading the map) without letting your reader feel the full

weight of each moment. Additionally, your narrator sometimes acts in ways that don't quite match the personality you've established. For instance, someone who is careful and detail-oriented probably wouldn't dismiss a package from their dead mother as just a clerical error so quickly. Think about how your character would really react in each situation. Also, whilst your descriptions of physical objects are quite good, you can add more emotional reactions. When the narrator holds something her mother made, what does that feel like? Does her chest hurt? Do memories flood back? These emotional details will help your reader connect more deeply with the story. Finally, consider developing the ending more fully. The realisation about never knowing what her mother noticed is powerful, but it comes very suddenly. You could explore this feeling more—perhaps show the narrator looking around her own room or neighbourhood with new eyes, trying to see things the way her mother did.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2

~~The moment I saw my mother's sloppy~~ [The moment I saw my mother's sloping], tall handwriting scrawled on the package, I knew it wasn't meant for me. The thing was, my mum had been dead for 6 months. Yes, exactly 6 months. And there was no absolute way that she could have sent me a package... unless a miracle? No. I'm not the sort of person you would find a "miracle" ~~to happen to~~ [happening to]. Instead, I squint through my glasses to check for expiration dates in that tiny handwriting on the back of food packages. No. It was probably just a clerical error.

#1 The package sat on the kitchen bench for 2 days, and each of the 17 times I walked past it, I swear I could've seen my mother tearing open the sloppy brown package with her bare hands, shredding the pieces into confetti. I'm not like my mum. I don't shout at random birds passing by or make a weird barking sound when I see a dog. Many people say I "look so similar to my mum". And yes, I do. But just physically.

#2 When I finally couldn't resist opening the package, I found my sister's old craft scissors, with tiny dents and black markings on the blades (because, unlike my mum, I can't rip it open with my bare hands). And inside, I found a map.

"Well that was anticlimactic." I thought, rolling my eyes.

#3 But as I peered closer at the paper, I noticed it was like those kinds of maps that you'd buy at a petrol station for a few dollars. It was hand-drawn on a thick, coffee-stained piece of paper that felt like fabric. There were intricately drawn illustrations and a compass rose that looked somewhat like the one my mum pinned on her dress, a sea serpent coiled around the legend, and mountains drawn in such detail that you could almost see ~~its~~ [their] smooth granite faces.

It was a map of our town. But not the town as it is - this was the town as my mother saw it: the library ~~labeled~~ [labelled] 'The Palace of Infinite Doors,' the park marked 'The Kingdom of Green,' and my primary school designated 'The Academy of Impossible Questions.' Everything in our town had been renamed, reimagined into a world that no one had ever seen before.

At the bottom, in her familiar ~~slopy~~ [sloping] handwriting: "For Emma. This is the real map. The other one just shows the boring version."

I traced the cobblestone roads with my finger, following the route from our house to the library - The Palace of Infinite Doors. I'd walked that way thousands of times, and never noticed the oak trees forming a royal arch or that Mrs. Henderson's garden bloomed a perfect rainbow. I looked at our house. And I couldn't help but feel a bit sad. I never knew what she noticed... what she saw.