

Section 1

#1 "The brass lantern between them threw a weak circle of light, shivering whenever the wind passed through the trees."

Strengths:

- You've created a vivid picture using sensory details that helps readers imagine the scene clearly
- The word "shivering" brings the lantern to life, making it feel almost like a living thing reacting to the wind

Unnatural Phrasing → The phrase "shivering whenever the wind passed through the trees" doesn't quite work because lanterns don't actually shiver—the flame flickers or the light wavers. When you give human actions to objects, make sure the action fits what the object can actually do.

Exemplar: *The brass lantern between them cast a weak circle of light, flickering whenever the wind stirred the branches above.*

#2 "Claire brushed a moth from the glass. 'This one knows the way.' / He nodded, eyes on the light. 'We used to follow it everywhere.'"

Strengths:

- Your dialogue feels natural and realistic, like how people actually talk to each other
- The moth detail adds a nice touch that makes the scene feel real and lived-in

Unclear Connection → When Claire says "This one knows the way" and Eli responds "We used to follow it everywhere," readers might wonder: what way does it know? Where did they follow it? Without more context, these lines feel mysterious but also confusing. Your readers need at least a small hint about what these memories mean.

Exemplar: *'This one knows the way back,' Claire said softly. He nodded, eyes on the light. 'We used to follow it down to the old dock every summer.'*

#3 "He didn't answer until she was almost gone. 'Take care of it.' / The lantern swung in her hand as she walked away, unlit but still warm."

Strengths:

- The ending image of the unlit but warm lantern is powerful and leaves readers thinking
- Your final line creates a bittersweet feeling that matches the mood of the whole story

Missing Emotional Weight → Your ending tells us what happens but doesn't help readers understand what the characters are feeling about this goodbye. When Claire walks away and Eli finally speaks, we should sense whether they're sad, angry, or accepting. Right now, the ending feels a bit flat emotionally because we're only seeing actions without understanding the feelings behind them.

Exemplar: *He didn't answer until she was almost gone, his voice barely above a whisper. 'Take care of it.' She paused for just a moment, then continued down the path. The lantern swung gently in her hand as she walked away, unlit but still warm.*

■ Your piece captures a quiet, thoughtful moment between two characters with a shared history. The lantern works well as a symbol connecting their past to their present, and you've shown good control over dialogue and description. However, your story would benefit from adding more substance to help readers understand why this meeting matters. Right now, we see Eli and Claire meeting with a lantern and talking about memories, but we don't know enough about their relationship or what's at stake in this moment. Are they old friends who drifted apart? Former partners? Siblings? Adding just a few hints would make the story much stronger. Additionally, consider adding more specific memories or details about their shared past. When Eli says "We used to follow it everywhere," your readers would connect more deeply if you showed where they went or what they did. The second paragraph, where they stand watching the water, could include a small flashback or a specific memory to give weight to their silence. Also, the final exchange between them needs clearer emotional direction—are they parting ways forever, or will they meet again? Your ending would pack more punch if readers understood what this goodbye truly means. Focus on adding emotional depth to match your already strong descriptive writing, and your piece will become much more powerful and meaningful for readers.

Section 2

#1 The lantern

They met by the creek just before dark. The brass lantern between them ~~threw~~ [cast] a weak circle of light, ~~shivering~~ [flickering] whenever the wind passed through the trees.

Eli kicked at a stone. "Didn't think you'd still have it."

Claire turned the lantern's knob, the flame flaring for a moment. "It still works."

He gave a quiet laugh. "You said that last time."

"And it was true then, too."

#2 They stood watching the water move past, slow and brown. The flame flickered against their faces, then steadied.

"You could've brought a new one," Eli said.

Claire brushed a moth from the glass. "This one knows the way."

He nodded, eyes on the light. "We used to follow it everywhere."

She didn't answer. Only lifted the lantern and set it down on the wooden rail, the metal clinking softly.

After a long moment, Eli leaned forward and blew gently. The flame wavered, then died. Smoke curled upward, pale in the dusk.

Claire waited, then picked it up again. "You never did like when it burned too long."

He shoved his hands into his pockets. "You never let it go out."

They held each other's gaze across the dark glass—its reflection catching both their faces, then neither.

#3 Finally, Claire turned ~~toward~~ [towards] the trail. "Goodnight, Eli."

He didn't answer until she was almost gone. "Take care of it."

The lantern swung in her hand as she walked away, unlit but still warm.