

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph

Strengths:

- You've created a calm, peaceful setting that contrasts nicely with the tension that comes later in your story
- Your sensory details like "sunlight filtered quietly" and "dust motes floating lazily" help readers picture the library scene clearly

Weak connection between setting and character emotion → Your opening spends time describing the library environment, but it doesn't connect strongly enough to what Oli is feeling or thinking. The description of Amber's fidgeting appears suddenly without showing us why Oli notices this particular behaviour or what makes this different from other days. Consider adding Oli's internal thoughts about Amber's unusual behaviour, such as: *"Amber's fingers fidgeted with the edge of her book—something she only did when she was nervous. I wondered what was bothering her, but before I could ask..."*

#2: Discovery and confrontation

Strengths:

- The mysterious note creates good suspense and makes readers want to know what happens next
- Your dialogue feels natural and shows the awkwardness between the two friends

Unclear motivation and revelation → The note saying "Amber knows. She's been lying to you" doesn't match what Amber actually reveals. Who wrote this note? Why would someone write it? Also, Amber's confession jumps straight to the literary magazine without explaining what other lies the note might be referring to. The connection between the note and the confession feels incomplete. You could strengthen this by making the note more specific: *"I reached into my backpack and found a note in Amber's handwriting, dated from weeks ago: 'I'm the magazine editor. I rejected Oli's story today. I can't tell her.'"*

#3: Ending paragraphs

Strengths:

- You show Oli's mixed feelings well—anger, hurt, but also some understanding of Amber's position
- The open-ended conclusion makes readers think about what might happen to the friendship

Insufficient emotional depth → Your ending tells us what Oli feels ("anger and embarrassment flooded through me"), but it doesn't show us these emotions through specific thoughts or physical reactions beyond walking out. The final questions about the friendship feel rushed and don't give readers enough detail about what makes this betrayal so significant to Oli. Why was this story so important? What did it mean to have Amber reject it? Try expanding this section: *"My chest tightened as I remembered staying up late, revising that story, believing Amber when she said it was brilliant. She'd watched me submit it, knowing she'd already decided to reject it. How many times had she pretended not to know the editor's identity whilst I wondered aloud who it could be?"*

■ Your piece tells an interesting story about friendship and betrayal, but it needs more depth in several areas. The central conflict—Amber rejecting Oli's story whilst pretending to support it—is relatable, but you haven't shown readers why this particular story mattered so much to Oli. What was it about? Why did Oli care deeply about getting published? Additionally, the mysterious note device feels confusing because it doesn't quite match what Amber confesses. Consider either removing the note entirely and having Oli discover the truth differently, or making the note clearer about exactly what Amber has been hiding.

Your character emotions need more showing rather than telling. Instead of writing "anger and embarrassment flooded through me," describe what anger feels like—perhaps Oli's hands shaking, or struggling to find words. Also, the paragraph beginning with "For a moment, neither of us spoke" would benefit from expansion. Show us Oli's thoughts racing through past conversations with Amber. What specific moments now seem like lies? This will help readers understand the depth of the betrayal.

Finally, your ending raises good questions but arrives too quickly. Take more time in those final moments—perhaps show Oli pausing at the library door, looking back at Amber, or noticing small details in the world outside that reflect the changed relationship. This will make the emotional impact stronger and give your story a more satisfying conclusion.

Section 2:

It was a regular Wednesday, or so I thought, as I sat in the library flipping through my notes for the upcoming essay. #1 The sunlight filtered quietly through the tall windows, highlighting the dust motes floating lazily in the air. I glanced over at Amber, my best friend since primary school, who seemed more distracted than usual. Her fingers fidgeted with the edge of her book, her eyes darting everywhere but at me.

We'd always been honest with each other—at least, I believed we had. That was what made what happened next so shocking. #2 I reached into my backpack for a pen and accidentally pulled out a crumpled sheet of paper that wasn't mine. It had my name on it, but the handwriting was unfamiliar. Slowly, I unfolded it. My heart hammered as I read the words: "Amber knows. She's been lying to you."

My eyes shot up to Amber. She looked away, and her cheeks flushed red. The ~~realization~~ [realisation] dawned cold and heavy. I stuttered, "Amber, what is this?" She bit her lip, her hands trembling. The seconds stretched, unbearable. She took a deep breath. "I'm sorry, Oli. I didn't know how to tell you. I'm the anonymous editor of the school literary magazine. The one who rejected your story. I didn't want to hurt you."

A thousand moments replayed in my mind—the times Amber reassured me that my story would be chosen, the way she'd listened quietly when I doubted myself. Anger and embarrassment flooded through me, but above all, I felt betrayed.

#3 For a moment, neither of us spoke. The trust I'd had felt irreparably cracked, but underneath the hurt was a strange sense of understanding. Amber hadn't meant to be cruel; she just didn't want to lose our friendship over something she thought was small. But to me, it changed everything.

I stood up, needing air, needing space. Her whispered apology echoed behind me as I walked out of the library. The world outside felt different—less safe, more complicated. And I wondered: could we ever go back to how things were, or was this the start of a new chapter neither of us had expected?