

Section 1:

#1: Opening sequence (from "DING DING DING!" to "without any distractions")

Strengths:

- Your opening grabs attention immediately with the onomatopoeia "DING DING DING!" which effectively creates urgency and tension
- You've established the setting of Grounopolis efficiently, giving readers a clear picture of an underground civilisation

Pacing imbalance → Your opening rushes through several important moments without giving readers time to breathe or fully experience them. The transition from the alarm bell, to running through crowds, to arriving at the cave, and then falling asleep happens in just a few sentences. This makes it difficult for readers to connect with the narrator or understand the danger they're facing. Phrases like "we were pushed and shoved around" and "slept within seconds" tell us what happened but don't show us the experience. Consider slowing down key moments and adding sensory details—what did the crowds sound like? How did your narrator feel reaching safety? What made them so exhausted?

Exemplar: *My heart pounded as Yarrow and I pushed through the maze of panicked bodies. Elbows jabbed my ribs whilst desperate hands clutched at my shoulders. When we finally stumbled into our dome-shaped cave, I collapsed onto my bed, my chest still heaving.*

#2: Discovery sequence (from "That is, until I woke up" to "dragon conversation")

Strengths:

- You build suspense effectively by having your narrator follow the mysterious footsteps step by step
- The reveal that Yarrow is communicating with a dragon creates an excellent plot twist that challenges what readers thought they knew

Unclear character motivation → Your narrator's decision-making needs clearer reasoning. Why does your narrator immediately follow Yarrow into the forbidden forest without hesitation or fear? You mention "I shivered" and reference that brave people came back "terrified," yet your narrator crawls after Yarrow without any internal debate, concern for safety, or questioning. This makes the character feel less realistic. Readers need to understand what drives your narrator—is it worry for a friend?

Curiosity? A sense of duty? Adding a sentence or two showing your narrator's thought process would make this risky decision more believable.

Exemplar: *My stomach twisted with dread. The Dragon's Forest had broken even the bravest warriors. But what if Yarrow was in danger? I couldn't abandon my friend. Taking a shaky breath, I crept after his fading shadow.*

#3: Climax and ending (from "I slowly peeped" to "It was pitch black")

Strengths:

- The sensory detail of "blurs of brown, green, white and blue" gives readers a vivid sense of disorientation during the grabbing moment
- Ending on a cliffhanger creates anticipation for what happens next

Abrupt conclusion without emotional grounding → Your ending focuses on physical action (the dragon grabbing the narrator) but doesn't give us any emotional reaction or thought from your narrator in that crucial moment. What does your narrator feel when they're grabbed? Terror? Confusion? Betrayal at Yarrow not warning them? The jump to "It was pitch black" happens too quickly without showing us the narrator's experience of being grabbed. Additionally, your narrator witnesses something extraordinary—dragons aren't mindless killing machines—but there's no moment of processing this revelation before the grabbing occurs. This robs the scene of emotional impact.

Exemplar: *Before I could move, the ice dragon's head swivelled towards me. Its crystalline eyes locked onto mine. "Yarrow!" I tried to scream, but icy talons clamped around my body, lifting me into the air. The forest spun beneath me—brown earth, green leaves, white scales, blue sky—then everything vanished into darkness.*

■ Your piece shows genuine creativity in world-building and plot development. The concept of Grounopolis and the revelation about dragons being intelligent creates an intriguing foundation for your story. However, your narrative would benefit significantly from deeper character development and slower pacing at key moments. Your narrator remains somewhat distant from readers because we don't experience their emotions or thoughts deeply enough. When major events happen—like entering a forbidden forest or discovering dragons can communicate—your writing rushes past them without exploring how these moments affect your narrator. Additionally, your piece would strengthen

considerably if you showed more of what characters are thinking and feeling, rather than simply telling us what they're doing. Consider expanding scenes where tension builds: let readers sit with your narrator's fear in the forest, their confusion watching Yarrow speak with a dragon, their panic when grabbed. Also, think about adding more specific details that make your world feel real—what does Grounopolis smell like? What does dragon speech sound like? These concrete details help readers fully enter your story's world and stay engaged with your characters' journey.

Score: 39/50

Section 2:

#1 DING DING DING! The loud warning bell rang. Terrified civilians ran to shelter, screaming and panicking. My trusted friend, Yarrow and I ran with the hurried pack and we were pushed and shoved around. We all had the same goal: to get back to our amazing, extensive underground town network called Grounopolis. Yarrow and I got back into our own dome-shaped cave, which was like a small house. We got into our comfortable beds and slept within seconds, without any distractions. **#1**

#2 That is, until I woke up in the middle of the silent night. I heard distant footsteps outside of our cave. I looked over to Yarrow's bed. He was not there. I carefully followed the footsteps out of Grounopolis and out into the forbidden Dragon's Forest. I shivered. Is Yarrow going to go there? All the brave people who went there came back terrified, saying it must be forbidden to go there. I crawled after Yarrow's faint shadow and I heard a few roars and dragon noises. Was he being eaten? No, it sounded like a dragon conversation. **#2 #3** I slowly peeped around the thick tree trunk I was hiding behind. There I saw Yarrow, talking(?) to an ice dragon. This is impossible,. how [How] can he speak with the cruel dragons? Our general knowledge was they [that they] were just mindless killing machines. I saw the ice dragon, coming over, and it grabbed me. I could see a blurs of brown, green, white and blue, but then—

It was pitch black. **#3**