

Section 1

#1: Opening paragraph ("Some mistakes don't just stain your conscience—they haunt your dreams and follow you everywhere like a shadow you can never outrun. My mistake wore the faces of Amber and Lilly. They were my whole world, and the day I lost them still replays in my mind with every heartbeat.")

Strengths:

- Your opening creates immediate emotional connection by establishing the serious nature of what's to come
- The personification of the mistake "wearing faces" is powerful and sets up the central relationship focus effectively

Lack of clarity in narrative perspective → Your piece presents a confusing narrator situation. You write "My mistake wore the faces of Amber and Lilly" and "Amber nudged my arm," but then state "One last adventure before the break, Lilly" as if the narrator is being addressed as Lilly. This creates confusion about whether the narrator is Lilly or whether Lilly is a separate character. The reader cannot determine who is telling the story, which makes following the events difficult.

Exemplar: *My mistake wore the faces of Amber and Lilly. Amber was bold and mischievous; Lilly was loyal and trusting. They were my whole world, and the day I lost them both still replays in my mind with every heartbeat.*

#2: Middle section (The paragraph beginning "The lock was tricky..." through "We were caught.")

Strengths:

- Your sensory details like "fingers slippery with nerves" help readers feel the tension of the moment
- The pacing builds effectively through short, sharp sentences during the discovery scene

Insufficient consequence development → Your writing tells us "We were caught" and that "Amber was sent home in tears—because of me," but doesn't explain what actually happened to create the broken friendships. You mention the principal's "cold words" but don't show us what punishment occurred, why Amber cried, or what specifically the narrator did that betrayed both friends. The phrase "because of me" suggests blame, but readers don't understand what action caused this. Did the narrator blame Amber? Did someone lie? Without these details, the "biggest mistake" remains unclear.

Exemplar: *Mrs Harris's voice was sharp: "Who suggested this?" I hesitated, and in that hesitation, I saw Amber's face crumple. "It was Amber's idea," I whispered, the words escaping before I could stop them. That was the real mistake—not the break-in, but the betrayal that followed.*

#3: Concluding section ("I didn't just break into a locked room that day—I broke trust, and with it, two precious friendships.")

Strengths:

- Your parallel structure between "breaking into a room" and "breaking trust" creates a satisfying thematic connection
- The reflection shows mature understanding that the real mistake was about relationships rather than rule-breaking

Underdeveloped emotional resolution → Your conclusion states the friendships were lost but doesn't explore how this loss affected your life beyond the immediate aftermath. You write "Lilly, who had stood by me through everything, suddenly sat two seats away," but this is the only concrete detail about the actual loss. The final sentences repeat that the mistake "can never be fixed" without showing us what you tried to do to repair things, or how you've grown from this experience. The reflection feels incomplete because readers don't understand what lasting impact this had on you or what you learned about yourself.

Exemplar: *I tried apologising to Amber countless times, but she wouldn't meet my eyes. Lilly's distance hurt even more—she hadn't done anything wrong, yet I'd destroyed her trust in me too. That's when I understood: loyalty isn't just about standing beside someone; it's about standing up for them when it matters most.*

■ Your piece demonstrates strong emotional awareness and uses vivid imagery effectively throughout. However, the narrative would benefit from greater clarity about who is telling the story and what specifically happened during the key moments. The confusion about whether you are Lilly or a separate narrator makes the story harder to follow. Additionally, your middle section needs more specific details about what the narrator did wrong—simply saying things went badly isn't enough for readers to understand why this is your "biggest mistake." Also, your conclusion would be stronger if you included concrete examples of how you attempted to fix things or what you learned from losing these friendships. Consider adding a paragraph that shows your efforts to apologise or reconnect, even if they failed. This would demonstrate genuine reflection and growth rather than simply stating regret.

Overall Score: 43/50

Section 2:

#1 The Biggest Mistake of My Life

Some mistakes don't just stain your conscience—they haunt your dreams and follow you everywhere like a shadow you can never outrun. My mistake wore the faces of Amber and Lilly. They were my whole world, and the day I lost them still replays in my mind with every heartbeat.

#2 It was a stormy afternoon, the kind where thunder feels like it's rattling your bones and fate seems twisted in the heavy air. School was almost over for the term; the corridors were emptying, windows rattling with the wind. Amber, bold and mischievous, nudged my arm. "One last adventure before the break, ~~Lilly~~ [Amber]," she urged, her eyes shining with trouble and promise.

Something inside me—fear, excitement, maybe both—answered her recklessness. Together we crept through the old gym hallway, our footsteps crunching on dusty tiles. Amber knew about the storeroom where all the confiscated phones and secret treasures from the term were hidden. "Let's just look," she whispered. "No one will find out."

The lock was tricky, but Amber's hands, clever and eager, worked their small magic. The door swung open, and a trove of forbidden treasures greeted us—glinting phones, smashed skateboards, even a crumpled note with a heart drawn on it. I saw my own reflection shaking, uncertain, in the glass.

Then—I did it. I reached for a glittery phone, my fingers slippery with nerves. It slipped. The crash echoed like a confession in the silence. Amber's face turned white. We froze. Heavy footsteps thundered toward us ~~and~~ [, and] Mrs Harris, her jaw set with anger, appeared in the doorway.

We were caught. The rest was a blur: guilt, the principal's cold words, that sickening twist inside as Amber was sent home in tears—because of me. Our names were whispered in the halls for days, but all I cared about was how Amber and I no longer shared knowing smiles in class. **#3** Lilly, who had stood by me through everything, suddenly sat two seats away, a chasm of silence between us.

I didn't just break into a locked room that day—I broke trust, and with it, two precious friendships. My biggest mistake wasn't mischief or curiosity. It was betraying Amber and Lilly with one hasty act. Now, when storms rattle the window, I remember that terrible choice, and the friends I lost to it. Some mistakes can never be fixed. This was mine.