

Section 1

#1 — "It was early morning, so early that the roosters hadn't even woken up yet. I sat on the dusty park bench, those that looked like they were built in Egyptian times, yet still felt so comfortable, a paradox that I could never seem to understand."

Strengths: Your piece establishes atmosphere beautifully through sensory detail—the dusty bench and image of Egyptian-era construction create vivid spatial grounding. The reflection on paradox reveals introspective maturity, showing the narrator recognising complexity in their own emotional response.

→ **Noun-phrase construction** Your phrase "those that looked like they were built in Egyptian times" lacks grammatical precision. The pronoun reference is unclear—"those" needs a clear antecedent. Additionally, the extended introductory clause becomes unwieldy and dilutes the impact of your opening image.

It was early morning, so early that the roosters hadn't even woken up yet. I sat on the dusty park bench, which looked as though it had been constructed in Egyptian times, yet still felt comfortably worn—a paradox I could never quite fathom.

#2 — "A voice came from the corner of his mind. A corner that could've been imagination but I was sure was not. 'Sorry, did I startle you?' I turned, seeing a little boy sitting on the same bench. 'I'm Ethan, and Harris told me about you.' it was almost too much to process with my morning brain, having voice that sounded so familiar, nearly as if it was my younger self calling out to me."

Strengths: Your piece creates compelling narrative tension through the mysterious appearance of Ethan. The detail about the voice's familiarity—"nearly as if it was my younger self calling out to me"—suggests thematic depth and foreshadows the resolution effectively.

→ **Perspective inconsistency and grammatical accuracy** Your writing shifts between third-person ("his mind") and first-person ("I turned"), which confuses readers about whose perspective they're inhabiting. Additionally, "having voice that sounded so familiar" contains a grammatical error—the phrasing should read "having a voice" or be restructured entirely. The lowercase "it" beginning the sentence also breaks standard punctuation conventions.

A voice came from a corner of my mind—a corner that could've been imagination but I was sure was not. 'Sorry, did I startle you?' I turned, seeing a little boy sitting on the same bench. 'I'm Ethan, and Harris told me about you,' he said. It was almost too much to process with my morning brain, hearing a voice so familiar, nearly as if my younger self were calling out to me.

#3 — "I walked away, watching Ethan jump up and down and run towards the swing set. I tried to leave silently, but I couldn't help but turn and watch. Something clicked in the back of my mind. Maybe the piece I was missing wasn't happiness. It was passing happiness onto others."

Strengths: Your piece reaches its emotional resolution with clarity and purpose. The realisation about "passing happiness onto others" provides genuine thematic insight, and the shift from envy to gratitude marks meaningful character development.

→ **Logical progression and conceptual clarity** The transition from observation to epiphany feels somewhat abrupt. Your narrative hasn't sufficiently established why the narrator equates Ethan's joy with their own fulfilment, or how observing a stranger's child provides the emotional answer to their earlier emptiness. This leap requires stronger scaffolding to feel earned rather than convenient.

I walked away, watching Ethan bound toward the swing set with the uninhibited joy I'd once possessed. As I turned back one final time, something crystallised within me—a recognition that perhaps the emptiness I'd carried wasn't about reclaiming my own childhood wonder, but rather about nurturing it in others. My contentment needn't come from reliving my past; it could emerge from witnessing and enabling others' joy.

■ Your piece demonstrates genuine emotional intelligence and explores a meaningful theme about nostalgia and growth. However, the narrative would benefit from stronger connection between your protagonist's internal journey and the appearance of Ethan—right now, their meeting feels somewhat coincidental rather than symbolically earned. Additionally, you'll strengthen your work by ensuring consistent point of view throughout and tightening the logical steps that lead your narrator toward their final realisation. Consider deepening the sensory details in your climactic moment to make the emotional shift feel more grounded and authentic. Your closing sentiment is powerful, but showing how this realisation physically manifests—through gesture, breath, or bodily response—would elevate the resolution from intellectual to visceral.

Score: 41/50

Section 2

It was early morning, so early that the roosters hadn't even woken up yet. I sat on the dusty park bench, ~~those that looked like they were built in Egyptian times~~ [which looked as though it had been constructed in Egyptian times], yet still felt so comfortable, a paradox that I could never seem to understand. I wasn't even attempting to appreciate the beauty of the playground before my eyes, yet I couldn't help but be mesmerised by the birds lightly chirping or the slight shift of the swings that were so mysterious when I

was younger. It was a scene of pure beauty and nostalgia, the type that would be put in nature documentaries if it were displaying children instead of wildlife. Yet, something felt off.

No laughter of other kids playing together. No crank of the faulty see-saw that the mayor never bothered to fix. I had always sat on the same park bench, watching the same view with the same birds, but now it was no longer comforting, just unsettling. ~~There always felt like there was an empty part of himself waiting to be fulfilled~~ [There had always been an empty part of me waiting to be fulfilled], but now I had grown up ~~I~~ [and] had lost that memory I used to have. The days of, "Tag, you're it!" and "Whee! This is so much fun!" ~~was~~ [were] gone. Completely evaporated.

A voice came from the corner of ~~his~~ [my] mind. A corner that could've been imagination but I was sure was not. "Sorry, did I startle you?" I turned, seeing a little boy sitting on the same bench. "I'm Ethan, and Harris told me about you." ~~It~~ [It] was almost too much to process with my morning brain, ~~having~~ [hearing a] voice that sounded so familiar, nearly as if it was my younger self calling out to me. "Hi, Ethan! Why are you at the park so early?" 2 [Two] figures appeared in the distance, waving. "Those are my parents." I smiled.

"Oh! How nice. I was just leaving."

I walked away, watching Ethan jump up and down and run towards the swing set. I tried to leave silently, but I couldn't help but turn and watch. Something clicked in the back of my mind. Maybe the piece I was missing wasn't happiness. It was passing happiness onto others. It was a quick realisation, sure. But I guess it was due. I looked back, not with envy, not with annoyance, but with gratitude. ~~gratitude~~ [Gratitude] for the gift of giving.