

Let's Write!

Critique Example

Selection Box

Darren potters in his house in the Urban Warfare Centre and gets himself a cup of tea, still somewhat warm from the flask he'd made the night before. He sits down on his bed and holds the chocolate wrapper he's found, bringing the sweet, sickly scent to his nose. He lies back and shuts his eyes. He sees Gramps' face, smiling with soft, full cheeks, calling him 'my boy'. The wrapper is a reminder of Christmas past. Gramps would buy his grandchildren a chocolate selection pack, into which would be tucked a crisp five-pound note. He gave them to Darren and Vinnie every year until the Christmas the year Dad had died, when Vinnie told his grandad that he 'wasn't a fucking baby,' so Gramps 'don't need to get it for him no more' and stomped out to the hall, got his black jitter jacket and went to the pub. He was seventeen. He'd been marginally obnoxious before, but this was quite the year. Vinnie wasn't the only one who had lost his dad, but he seemed to think so, and for Darren that was something he struggled to forgive. Always making himself the centre of everything. Why did his pain hurt more? Why should the rest of the family matter less?

It was bad enough that it was their first Christmas since Dad died. Graham Dean, aged just forty-two, had arrived at work one Monday morning in May, parked his car and before he could get open the driver's door, out of the blue, no previous diagnosis, had a massive heart attack. He died there and then in the car, his Tupperware sandwich box and hard hat lying on the front seat, the keys still in the ignition.

To Darren and his older brother, Dad was Christmas. On Christmas Eve when they were pretending to be asleep, stockings hanging from the ends of their honeyed pine beds, Dad would come into their room dressed in red suit and white beard (Darren didn't admit to Vinnie that it took him until he was twelve to realise it was their dad and not the real Father Christmas). He'd fill their stockings with plastic parachute men, spinning tops, yo-yos and sweets, as well as a clementine and a couple of walnuts, while Mum could be heard laughing outside the bedroom door and Dad would whisper 'ho, ho, ho' as headed back out onto the landing. On Christmas morning he would make them wait until they'd had at least one excited mouthful of rice crispies and a sip of orange juice before letting them loose on the piles of presents mum had spent all night wrapping. He'd grin as the boys gasped at the sight of toys they'd coveted through the year and shouted out 'that's ace, thaaaanks!'

When Vinnie came home from the pub that Christmas Day in ninety-five 1995, Gramps had already gone home, even though Mum and Darren had tried to get him to

Commented [JD1]: Christmases past?

Commented [JD2]: Will all readers understand this? Change to 'worn leather'?

Commented [JD3]: To ground the era.

Commented [JD4]: Like the image here.

Commented [JD5]: Lovely scene. Nostalgic.

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