

Kelly Pennell

Writer's Workshop Critique

I enjoyed reading your story Elizabeth! Your theme conveys a dark sadness that is apparent throughout your whole story. I could feel the disdain and despair Abigail felt. Ironically, Abigail wanted to harm and rid herself of her sister, then met her demise in the end. I honestly could not find a flaw in your theme. The only thing that I found negative about your theme was the way it changed my mood. This is not a bad thing at all! Good stories change your feelings and disposition! I felt terrible for Abigail. Obviously, she is having a mental break down and has no one to confide in. Her family seems innocent in your story, but maybe the grandparents have caused some turmoil for her. She also didn't seem to have a nurturing environment to help her thrive.

Your setting changes a few times, and each time they are realistic and influence the actions that take place in your story. The only weakness I found would be to have more vibrant descriptions of the forest in Vermont where they live; it's a little vague. For example: "Abigail and her sister lived deep in Vermont's forests, where nothing but towering trees and lush wilderness surrounded them for miles." Also, maybe elaborate on the house they live in since they are poor—for example, dilapidated, run-down, etc.

Your characters and plot were excellent! Abigail's character has a powerful voice throughout your story. You can follow her thoughts and conspiracies well. The plot has a thrilling edge to it. You make Abigail's feelings and intentions clear from the beginning. Abigail's harmful action toward her sister stems from her internal motivation, which is clearly presented. The rising action in your story kept me in suspense as to whether she would go through with hurting her sister. In the end, the resolution had an interesting twist. I did not expect them all to perish in the fire! One thing I pondered as I read was that I did not get a clear picture of the grandparents. One way to make the grandparents more known would be to add a little dialogue from them. As a reader, I will then be able to identify their personalities a little more and their importance to your story.

You stay true to your first person-narrative point of view throughout your story. One weakness of keeping to this first-person narrative is that it limits objectivity. This means we only ever get to know the narrator's (Abigail's) mind; what she thinks, feels, etc. about herself and the other characters. I would be curious to see how Abigail's sister and grandparents perceive her? To fix this, you wouldn't want to shift your point of view. Instead, you could add more dialogue or internal monologues from the other characters.

Grammatically, you did well overall. I made some suggestions using 'Word: Track Changes and Comments.' These suggestions are located on your paper that I uploaded in the post. They are subjective, and you can use them if you see fit. Your style of writing is on point! I can tell you enjoy writing stories, and this one kept me on the edge of my seat! One suggestion I have is to make sure you check and double-check your grammar. I like to use 'Grammarly.' You can download it to Microsoft Word. It is very helpful at picking out the slightest, overlooked errors (which Editor in Word misses). It even gives suggestions on how mistakes can be changed.

I had a few questions that came to mind as I read your story. What is Abigail's sister's name? Also, how does Abigail's family perceive her?

Nice job!