



## **TEARING MYSELF TOGETHER**

Written by ANNA WHATELEY

**RECOMMENDED FOR: Ages 13–18 YEARS OLD (YEARS 7 TO 12, SECONDARY)**

**GENRE:** Young Adult

**THEMES:** coming-of-age, identity, family, friendship, confidence, acceptance, love, courage, hope, trust, forgiveness, joy, perseverance, resilience, neurodivergence, Autism Spectrum Disorder, ADHD, Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, disability, empathy, romance, LGBTIQ+

### **CURRICULUM LEARNING AREAS:**

- English
- HASS – Civics and Citizenship
- Health & Physical Education
- Cross Curriculum Priorities – Personal and Social Capability; Ethical Understanding

**NOTES WRITTEN BY:** Christina Wheeler

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## INTRODUCTION

*Tearing Myself Together* is the story of Hilzy, a neurodivergent Year 12 student learning to understand her strengths and navigate the challenges in her life. Hers is anything but simple, with autism, ADHD and Ehlers Danlos Syndrome providing many complexities, not the least of which is living with a body that is unpredictable and riddled with pain. Not only is Hilzy trying to complete her final exams, but she is also grappling with broken relationships with both her mother and best friend, Imogen. Amidst this turmoil comes the clumsiness of first love, made even more awkward by Hilzy's self-consciousness and lack of experience. If it wasn't for Hilzy's older sister Max, life would be virtually impossible.

In a story about acceptance, love and hope, Hilzy eventually discovers that the very things that make her different give her the strength, courage and endurance to find joy and happiness. Through Hilzy's coming-of-age journey, therefore, *Tearing Myself Together* explores the importance of diversity, identity, and belonging.

It is worth noting that the text contains references to gambling addiction, mental health issues and death. It is suitable for Young Adults, most notably Year 9+.

## PLOT SUMMARY

Sisters Hilzy and Max are doing it tough. Their show business mother works on cruise ships, sending home the scraps of her income that are not lost on poker machines. University student Max works as many shifts as she can at the petrol station, but rent, groceries and Hilzy's medical bills mean it's hard making ends meet. Between her autism, ADHD and Ehlers Danlos Syndrome, Hilzy literally *clanks* her way through each and every day.

Because of their circumstances, Hilzy's best friend Imogen confides in her fathers, who seek help from family services. Feeling utterly betrayed, Hilzy abandons their friendship, filled with anger and feelings of mistrust. Gone is their special connection, a bond like no other; Imogen, too is neurodivergent. Not only that but Imogen is also the only one who understands what it is like to have a body with a mind of its own, having undergone several life-saving surgeries to remove skin cancers. Death is ever-present for Imogen, pre-occupying her body and soul.

As final exams approach, Hilzy's EDS causes her leg to lock, meaning immediate surgery and a long recovery. With her future upended, the last thing she can handle is romance. Feeling insecure and embarrassed by her faulty body, Hilzy must try to find the connection with Dawn that her body refuses to give.

Sharing the perspectives of neurodiverse characters, *Tearing Myself Together* is an important coming-of-age story that addresses themes of diversity, trust, family and forgiveness.

## Q&A WITH ANNA WHATELEY

### What themes are you exploring in the novel?

'*Tearing Myself Together* is a story about learning to trust your body, your friends, your heart, even when they've all broken before. It delves into the complexities of self-discovery, the bonds of friendship, and how disabled and neurodivergent teenagers find strength in aspects of themselves that society often deems flawed. It looks at how medical trauma shapes our sense of self, and how love and loyalty can both heal and hurt. The story asks what it means to inhabit a body that does not always behave as expected, and how we learn to care for it without shame.'

### What motivated you to follow *Peta Lyre's Rating Normal* with this novel?

'Where *Peta Lyre's Rating Normal* explored what it means to unmask and accept neurodivergence, *Tearing Myself Together* moves deeper into the body, and what it means to live in one that resists control, and how that shapes connection and identity.'

### What role does the character of Imogen play in the story?

'Imogen is Hilzy's best friend, and she emerged from a single spark: an article about the speed of death that I couldn't get out of my mind. She reads, as I did, how death moves throughout a cell at two millimetres an hour. Imogen holds the space before an operation and contemplates this death as a melanoma grows on her lip. Her story reminds us that we live in the skin cancer capital of the world and that we must remain vigilant. We also need to consider what surgeries mean for our bodies on a psychological level.'

### It sounds like writing the novel was a deeply personal journey for you. Tell us about that.

'Writing about Hilzy and Imogen's friendship and disabilities was both cathartic and confronting. It allowed me to ask the questions I couldn't face in real life. It also allowed me to show that neurodivergent people are all different, and their lives are often about physical existence just as much as the mental world.'

'I wanted to write the type of story I needed as a teen: one that said you can be autistic, ADHD, disabled, queer, and still have joy, friendship, and love. Living with Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome and parenting a child with similar challenges has given me an intimate view of how our bodies and minds collide with the medical world. After my first novel came out, I experienced quite a crash in my physical health, leading to my diagnosis with EDS. While research on how EDS changes over time is woefully limited, emerging evidence suggests that stress, illness, and hormonal shifts can worsen connective tissue symptoms. Many people with EDS notice increased pain and instability during puberty, pregnancy, or menopause, when estrogen levels fluctuate and tissue repair slows. That experience deepened my empathy for Hilzy's fight to keep moving forward in a body that won't always cooperate, and the quiet courage it takes to find meaning and belonging inside that struggle.'

'At one point I had to stop writing because I couldn't separate my own medical trauma from Hilzy's. When I finally returned to the manuscript, it felt like she'd been waiting, stubbornly, arms crossed, demanding her story be finished. Hilzy refuses to be a medical subject or a source of pity. She claims her story, her body, her friendships, and her joy, on her own terms. Writing her helped me do the same. I hope *Tearing Myself Together* helps readers feel less alone in the chaos of growing up different and reminds them that even the most fragile connections can hold extraordinary strength.'

## BEFORE READING

- Using the cover and blurb of the text, make predictions about this story. What are you wondering? Why might the book have this title?
- Discuss the dedication: 'For every zebra who has been told they are a horse'. How can you relate to this? Return to this discussion after reading the text.
- After reading *Tearing Myself Together*, share how your ideas about the book have changed. What has stayed the same?

## CLASSROOM DISCUSSION AND ACTIVITIES

### ENGLISH

#### Discussion prompts:

- The text begins with a handwritten journal entry. How is this journal used throughout *Tearing Myself Together* to bring the heads and hearts of Imogen and Hilzy onto the same page?
- Discuss Hilzy's description of 'the feeling of failure' on p. 4 that 'every kid with ADHD is deeply familiar with'. How can you relate to this feeling? Describe to a friend a feeling of failure that you have had. How is the feeling magnified for Hilzy?
- Why is Hilzy so surprised that 'someone strong like Dawn [would] want someone like me' (p. 22)? What can we infer about Hilzy from such a comment?
- What does Hilzy mean when she says, 'My rejection dysphoria lurches a little' (p. 22)?
- Why does Hilzy say, 'ADHD, you can be a bitch' (see p. 23)? In what other ways does Hilzy's ADHD reveal itself? How does this help readers better understand people with ADHD?
- Hilzy finds following recipes difficult because there are 'so many steps' (p. 35). How has she navigated this? What does this reveal about her resilience and ability to adjust?

- Why is there a character like Frankie in this story? How would it be different without her? Why does she seem to fade away part-way through the book?
- Discuss the use of the word 'clank' throughout *Tearing Myself Together*.
- Although the 'rift' between Hilzy and Imogen is deep, why does Hilzy feel that 'maybe the cliffs on each side are closer now' (p. 42)?
- What strategies does Hilzy use to navigate social interactions?
- Why does Dawn liken Hilzy to Catra from *She-Ra*? How does Hilzy feel about this?
- Dawn says that Maria from *The Sound of Music* is 'heroic and kind of ... ADHD' (p. 88). How is identifying these traits in a positive character such as Maria helpful?
- Why are Dawn and Hilzy good for one another?
- With reference to the main characters, settings and events of *Tearing Myself Together*, discuss the following excerpt:
  - 'Frankie sweeps me up in her whirlwind. Imogen was a rock. My mother is a cyclone. Max is the river, running strong and tying us together. Dawn has this connection to the earth, like coral, or mushrooms.' (p. 114)
- Discuss the Secret Santa gifts that Hilzy and Imogen exchange. How do these gifts reflect the depth and strength of their relationship, even though it may not always feel so strong?
- What is the significance of Hilzy and her friends watching *E.T.*?
- How are Hilzy and her mother similar and different? What is the impact of Fabiana Mia's return on Hilzy? What do you think will become of her? Does she represent hope or despair? Discuss.
- How important is hope to this story? Support your thinking with reasoning and evidence from the text.
- Why does Dawn say that 'shame is a wasted emotion' (p. 236)?
- How does Imogen's vulnerability 'let us all in' (p. 239), including readers?
- Why has the author included a character like Imogen who shares so many of the challenges that Hilzy faces? How is Hilzy's life different without Imogen in it? How does it change once they are reconciled? What does this tell us about relationships such as theirs?
- How does Hilzy use humour as a counterweight to her challenges? Why is this important?
- How do Hilzy and Imogen find moments of joy in their quiet acts of defiance?
- Discuss how Hilzy's physical fragility reflects the theme of connection in *Tearing Myself Together*.

- How does Dawn help teach Hilzy the importance of communication?
- How does Hilzy learn to embrace her autism and ADHD to help navigate the events she faces in *Tearing Myself Together*?
- How important are the settings such as Moreton Bay, Minjerribah, the hospital and South Bank to the telling of this story? How have language features been used to bring these settings to life?
- What comment is being made about mainstream schooling in *Tearing Myself Together*? How does attending Bayside Community College help Hilzy?
- Read the Author's Note at the end of the text. Discuss her comment that 'feeling less than remains one of the most painful parts of disability'.
- Make predictions about Hilzy's life in one month, one year and one decade after the text ends.

### Learning experiences:

- After reading the Prologue, summarise your understanding of the characters and events of *Tearing Myself Together*. What are you wondering? Speculate about what may happen in this story before reading further.
- How does the first chapter of *Tearing Myself Together* introduce tension?
- In small groups, choose a scene from *Tearing Myself Together* to reenact.
- Why is it that Imogen 'couldn't always let [Hilzy] in, either' (p. 2)? Do you sometimes find it difficult to let others into your world? Share in a reflection.
- Hilzy describes her 'social battery' as being at 'zero' (p. 6). What depletes her? How does she recharge? What makes your social battery reach zero? How do you manage this? Share in a reflection.
- Explain the connection Hilzy has with her cousin Nik. Why is he such a comfort to her?
- What does *Tearing Myself Together* share about the concept of family? Use evidence from the text to support your thinking.
- In the role of Imogen, explain why you talked to your dads about Max and Hilzy's homelife. What were you hoping to achieve? How would you navigate this differently if you had the chance?
- Explain the theory of 'spoons' (see p. 48). How does this help readers to better understand Hilzy? How does it help Hilzy to better understand herself?
- Which character from *Tearing Myself Together* do you most relate to? Why? Share in a reflection.

- Create a Character Comparison of Hilzy and Imogen. What are their traits? How are they similar and different? Use excerpts from the text to support your thinking.
- With a partner, analyse the language features used in one of the following passages, discussing how these further engage readers:
  - P. 110 – first paragraph
  - P. 190 – last paragraph
- In the role of Hilzy, write a journal entry about your aching desire to be understood.
- In a reflection, share a time when you needed to use quiet courage to overcome challenges.
- In the role of Max, write a recount of your life with Hilzy.
- Create a character portrait of Dawn, Frankie or Max. Use excerpts from the text to illustrate your understanding of this character.
- What role does family play in *Tearing Myself Together*? How does this text share different family units? Use evidence from the text to support your ideas.
- After reading *Tearing Myself Together*, reread the Prologue. How does it foreshadow what is to come? What in the Prologue did you miss on your first reading?
- What, according to Hilzy, defines 'growing up' (see p. 196)? How is *Tearing Myself Together* a coming-of-age story?
- How does the Schoolies camping trip to Minjerribah help Hilzy, Max, Dawn and Imogen? Describe a trip or experience you have shared with friends or family that has helped you.
- Hilzy thinks that 'if we could just fit neatly into pre-designated roles, established relationships, life would be much easier' (pp. 216-217). Debate whether she is right.
- Why, even though the trip to Minjerribah has been enlightening, can't Hilzy 'let go and enjoy this peace' (p. 230)? What would you like to say to her about this? Role play with a partner.
- Explain how horizons are used in *Tearing Myself Together* to synthesise the main themes of this story.
- Create a soundtrack to reflect various characters, settings, events and themes of *Tearing Myself Together*. Give brief annotations to explain each track's inclusion.
- How does sharing experiences of disability from the perspectives of characters such as Hilzy help audiences to be more balanced?
- What is your biggest take-away from reading *Tearing Myself Together*? Share in a reflection.

- Choose a scene from *Tearing Myself Together* to write from the perspective of a character other than Hilzy.
- Discuss the use of figurative language throughout *Tearing Myself Together*, and how this contributes to reader engagement. Examples include:
  - 'Yelling echoes down the hall.' P. 1
  - 'I'm frozen in bed with nothing but a body full of sensations I can't name.' P. 1
  - 'My chest beats in time with the pain in my ankle.' P. 2
  - '... the sun leans over the horizon, turning the gum trees a baleful orange and red.' P. 2
  - 'Sweat drips down my thighs, turning me from solid to liquid.' P. 3
  - 'The silence has such an ominous tone.' P.4
  - 'Hot water courses down my genetically broken body.' P. 6
  - 'Our frustration fuels the wind and angry sky. The Pin is throwing us out, like the bones of the shipwreck.' P. 10
  - 'The pain of the past weighs heavier than the anchor.' P. 11
  - 'Waves tower over our boat as it slaps against the water after every crest.' P. 11
  - 'My hands are like jelly after hours of fishing.' P. 12
  - 'My mind jumps from one topic to the next and back again, all the threads unspooling at the same time.' Pp. 14-15
  - 'The sky over the bay is still dark, mad at our intrusion.' P. 17
  - 'The storm got into my bones and my skin itches from the salt water.' P. 17
  - 'She melts into the bench.' P. 24
  - 'Dawn rumbles deep in my chest.' P. 26
  - 'Guilt that I took up his time descends through my solar plexus and grumbles with my hungry stomach.' P. 38
  - '... the air would be filled with laughter instead of this heavy silence.' P. 40
  - 'How can I want to run to someone and run away from them at the same time?' P. 41
  - 'My heart slows from a gallop to whatever horses do that's more than a trot.' P. 52
  - 'Heat crawls up my neck, shame or frustration, a blur of both.' P. 71
  - '... that warmth in my belly is spreading past my shame.' P. 72

- 'She's solid, Dawn is. Solid as a tree that won't fall over in a storm.' P. 81
- 'The cold air pinches her dark tan cheeks with pink.' P. 81
- '... and thrills spark up my spine.' P. 84
- '... my hands so cold the crutches send shards of pain up my forearms as I move back inside.' P. 86
- 'I lie still, imagining myself sinking into the bed the way mist settles into the air.' P. 95
- 'My skin is too loose, like the seams have been unpicked.' P. 97
- 'But I also feel like I'm swinging a sword that's lost its weight.' P. 107
- 'The markets are in full swing as the sun falls towards the west.' P. 109
- '... and the setting sunlight kisses my cheek under the palm trees.' P. 110
- 'The sun gives up and the sky changes to lilac and dusty blue.' P. 110
- 'My knee is swelling with pockets of fluid on either side of the patella. Like bags under your eyes, but hot and red.' P. 111
- 'Avocado splurges out the end like a green turd.' P. 112
- 'Dawn's laugh reminds me of rolling a wheelie bin down the driveway... like a sleeping dragon . . . having a satisfying dream.' P. 112
- 'My body is a collection of stings, throbs, and aches.' P. 152
- '... I was a flood of words and now they're all gone and there's a sad echo left in my chest.' P. 152
- 'The bruise from her actions is yellowed around the edges and disappearing in the middle.' P. 155
- 'My fatigue seeps out into the room.' P. 164
- 'The lace curtains flutter with the breeze, whispering tales of the softer life I could have had. The contrast is stark against the raw one I ended up with.' P. 164
- '... the bright colours clash with my see-through skin.' P. 165
- 'The guilt is toxic and floods my veins faster than the general anaesthetic.' P. 168
- 'Throbbing pain drags me out of a dreamless sleep.' P. 169
- 'Nerves twist my gut...' P. 174
- '... my heart does leaps from my chest.' P. 175
- 'Dawn's face creases and wrings at my heart.' P.176

- 'Shame is thick in my throat.' P.185
- 'Shame and fury fill my insides, churning them in cyclonic patterns.' P. 186
- 'My guilt and uncertainty swirl...' P. 215
- 'My guts are in pieces, from both motion sickness and nerves.' P. 220
- 'Max gives me some of her bombastic side-eye...' P. 224
- 'The view through the thin trees stretches out to the sand and sky. Warm air fills my lungs and a sense of ease and belonging creeps through my veins.' P. 226
- 'High above, cheeky rainbow lorikeets fill the trees with their screeching calls, a blur of green and orange against the fiery backdrop of the setting sun.' P. 231
- 'The air is warm, thick with salt and sea freshness.' P.233
- 'Her voice holds a hardness, a distance that tugs at my heart.' P. 234
- '... we're greeted by a refreshing gust of wind and the complete absence of other people.' P. 234
- '... hair wisps across her face in the moonlight, my body singing again to be so close to her.' P. 235
- 'There's nothing between this place and the coral sea, its breath washing over me as I face into the wind.' P. 238
- '... her voice a soothing melody.' P. 238

### ASSESSMENT:

- How are the references of death moving 'two millimetres an hour' used to tell a story that is ultimately about finding joy in life?
- How does the first-person narration of this story help readers to better understand neurodivergent perspectives?
- Respond to the following statement: *Tearing Myself Together* is a book about identity.
- Compare *Tearing Myself Together* with another text that shares the point of view of an autistic protagonist (see Corresponding Texts list below).
- How does Hilzy learn to reclaim joy despite her 'dysfunctional body' (p. 5)?
- Imagine *Tearing Myself Together* is to be made into a feature film. The director has decided to cut Frankie, Matt, Nik or Dr Sanjiv from the film. Justify who should stay and who should go.

- In a graphic organiser, compare Hilzy and Imogen. Include excerpts from the text to show your understanding of these characters.
- With reference to one of the following excerpts from *Tearing Myself Together*, write a monologue in the role of Hilzy:
  - ‘Me? Nah, I’m just Hilary.’  
The truth of what I said crushes my insides. Do I really believe I’m just Hilary? Everyone’s bendy clown; the neurodivergent, genetically disordered, Ehlers-Danlos Syndrome girl with stretchy skin who can’t stop talking? Is that all I’ll ever be?’ Pp. 24-25
  - ‘I really don’t like silence. Without someone to bounce off, I lose my edges. Autistic people have trouble with proprioception, knowing where our body is in the world, and mine can be extreme. It’s not just my body either, I find it hard to know who I am without others, like identity echolocation.’ P. 42
  - ‘My autistic side doesn’t trust people in my physical space, but at the same time, I search for contact to figure out where I am in the world, and to feel warmth and human connection.’ P. 51
  - ‘They nearly put me and Max in a foster home because Imogen betrayed me. *Stab. Clack.* I had to make all new friends for high school because she didn’t come with me. *Stab. Clack.* I had to miss her for all this time. *Stab. Clack.*’ P. 64
  - ‘I’m a non-Newtonian fluid. Cornflour and water. The force it takes to keep me together is excessive. If only she could, though, I might slip through her fingers and liquefy back onto the floor.’ P. 78
  - ‘The archive. Death is all we have to keep us alive.’ P. 79
- Write a newspaper article about inequitable access to healthcare and wellness because of wealth.
- Explain how *Tearing Myself Together* uses cartoon characters from *Steven Universe* and *She-Ra* to help tell this story.
- With reference to the following excerpt from *Tearing Myself Together*, write an exposition about ‘labels’:
  - ‘It’s hard, you know? To filter through all the labels and meanings and who and what we are. In the end, I decided I’m a woman in my own way.’ P. 102
- In an essay, discuss the role of shame in *Tearing Myself Together*.
- In the role of Dawn, write a recount of your time knowing Hilzy.
- Write an additional chapter suitable for inclusion in *Tearing Myself Together*.

- Create a new cartoon/comic book character of Hilzy that showcases her traits. Using this character, make a short comic strip of her in action. Alternatively, create a graphic novel version to retell a part of Hilzy's story.
- Explain why this text is entitled *Tearing Myself Together*.
- How are the metaphors of weather and storms used to reflect the main themes and storyline of *Tearing Myself Together*?
- Before her surgery, Hilzy gives Imogen a new blank journal. In the role of Imogen, write the first few entries into this journal.
- With reference to the passage on p. 206 and in context with the main themes of *Tearing Myself Together*, discuss why Hilzy likens herself, Max and Imogen to the three witches in *Macbeth*.
- In an essay, discuss the character development that Hilzy undergoes in *Tearing Myself Together*.
- Select two characters from *Tearing Myself Together*. On a graphic organiser, show your understanding of their different *voices*. Choose one of these characters. Write a recount of a scene from the novel from this character's first-person point of view.
- Write a reflection that explores your own experiences of self-discovery, vulnerability, resilience and growth. If applicable, include if these experiences were connected to your body letting you down or surprising you in some way.
- In pairs, prepare and present a television interview with Hilzy that explores the values and attitudes expressed in *Tearing Myself Together*.
- In small groups, write and record a podcast that discusses how the characters of *Tearing Myself Together* navigate diversity, relationships, challenges and love.

## HASS – Civics and Citizenship

### Discussion prompts:

- How does *Tearing Myself Together* comment on the rights of those with disabilities? What has stood out to you about social inclusion and fairness? How have your ideas about equality and social inclusion been impacted by reading this text?
- Given the Australian Government's social media ban for children under 16 years, consider how young people can access reliable information about disability and connect with the disabled community. How can helpful digital content now be accessed?

### Learning experiences:

- Explore websites and online resources aimed at social inclusion and diversity. Time permitting and in small groups, create your own website to promote the rights of those with disabilities.
  - Diversity Council of Australia: <https://www.dca.org.au/>
  - Inclusion Australia: <https://www.inclusionaustralia.org.au/>
  - Australian Human Rights Commission: <https://humanrights.gov.au/about-us/media-centre/speeches/speeches/promoting-and-protecting-human-rights-australia>
- Visit the United Nations Sustainable Development Goals site - <https://sdgs.un.org/goals>. Discuss which of these goals are being addressed in texts such as *Tearing Myself Together*.

### ASSESSMENT:

- Create a campaign to present to your local community that promotes greater awareness of social inclusion.
- Conduct a survey of your local public transport networks and shopping centres. Collect data about how they are socially inclusive. Create a list of practical improvements that could be made to make the local area more accessible to the whole community, including those with disabilities.
- Write a letter to your local Member of Parliament to lobby for greater assistance for low-income earners with health issues and disabilities.

### HEALTH & PHYSICAL EDUCATION

#### Discussion prompts:

- Discuss both the destructive and constructive relationships that exist in *Tearing Myself Together*. How does the text promote respectful relationships? What do the main characters do to ensure the relationships they have are healthy rather than toxic?
- How is *Tearing Myself Together* an important text that celebrates diversity?
- In what ways is this story about learning to trust your body and emotions?
- How do Hilzy and Imogen learn to accept, love and care for their bodies without shame? Why is this important to their wellbeing? How can you strengthen your own sense of acceptance as well as that of others?
- How important are identity and belonging to happiness? How do trusted friends help strengthen these?
- How does Hilzy show self-awareness in this story?

#### Learning experiences:

- In a reflection, share what have you learnt about yourself and your engagement with others through reading *Tearing Myself Together*?
- As a class, devise three goals to help make your school community more inclusive.
- Invite neurodiverse students to share their strengths. Create a visual representation that celebrates these strengths.

**ASSESSMENT:**

- Create a brochure that outlines the tenets of respectful relationships.
- Provide a summary of the relationships in Hilzy's life, both respectful and harmful. Show how she protects herself from harmful relationships.
- Design a website for your school's intranet that promotes wellbeing, offering practical strategies and support networks. See p. 255 for contact details of organisations such as Beyond Blue and Lifeline.
- Prepare a research paper that enquires into the ways disabilities and neurodivergence are portrayed in the media. Include references to the how novels such as *Tearing Myself Together* challenge stereotypes.
- Evaluate the connection between identity and wellbeing. How is this shown through *Tearing Myself Together*?
- Devise a set of Strategy Cards to help children manage and self-regulate their emotions.

## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

**ANNA WHATELEY** lives in Meanjin on Turrbul and Yuggera land. She has always worked in literature and education and holds a PhD in young adult fiction. As an author, Anna writes young adult fiction and has contributed to multiple anthologies on disability and autism.



## ABOUT THE WRITER OF THE NOTES

**Christina Wheeler** is a Teacher Librarian, speaker, literacy specialist and writer. She has been creating Teacher's Notes for over seventeen years and is a fervent advocate for deep analysis and rich discussion of texts. Christina has presented at international, national and state conferences, sharing her expertise in effective approaches to learning, teaching, academic research skills and literacy. She is passionate about nurturing in children not only a love for literature, but the critical thinking skills to make genuine connections between the stories they read and the world in which they live, learn and love.

## CORRESPONDING TEXTS

As companion texts to *Tearing Myself Together*, consider the following texts:

- Whately, Anna Peta Lyre's *Rating Normal*, Allen & Unwin, 2020
- *The Assembly* Documentary Series, ABC, 2024
- *Austin* TV Series, ABC, 2024
- Haddon, Mark *The Curious Incident of the Dog in the Night-Time* Red Fox, 2014
- Heyworth, Melanie *Remarkable Remy* Hardie Grant Children's Books, 2023
- King, Madonna and Rebecca Sparrow *Out of the Box* University of Queensland Press, 2024
- Walsh, Melanie *Isaac and his Amazing Asperger Super-Powers* Walker Books, 2026
- Wester, Allayne *Sensitive* University of Queensland Press, 2019
- Wheeler, Samantha *Everything I've Never Said* University of Queensland Press, 2018