

## Helena Fox: Anxiety & Friendship

Secondary School, Years 9–10

- 'At three in the morning when I can't sleep, the room ticks over in the dark and all I have for company is the rush of words coming up fast like those racehorses you see on television, poor things, and when their hearts give out they are laid on the ground and shot dead behind a blue sheet.' (*How it Feels to Float*, page 3)

**Personal Writing Prompt:** In *How it Feels to Float*, the main character often feels anxious and overwhelmed. Can you think of a time when you felt this way? Describe the situation. Did you have someone to talk to about how you were feeling? If so, did it help to have them listen?

- 'I press SEND. This email feels commemorative. It's the one hundredth message I've sent since Grace vanished and took a whole slab of me with her. I can't wait to scream in her face.' (*How it Feels to Float*, page 261)

**Writing Prompt:** Can you think of a time when a friend made an important difference in your life? Describe what happened.

- **Discussion Point:** Why are friendships important?

## Key Curriculum Areas

**Learning Areas:** English, Humanities

**Capabilities:** Critical and Creative Thinking, Personal and Social, Ethical Understanding

## About the Session

**Helena Fox**, winner of the 2020 Victorian Premier's Literary Award in the Young Adult category, explores topics of grief, mental illness, and the importance of community in her work. Her novel, *How It Feels to Float*, makes a compelling case for kindness – both to each other and to oneself.

In this thoughtful session, Fox discusses the value of listening, of compassion, and how sometimes simply being there for someone can be an act of great kindness.

## About the Author

Helena Fox is the author of the award-winning novel *How It Feels To Float*, published in Australia and overseas. She lives by the sea in Wollongong, Australia, where she mentors young writers and runs workshops on writing and mental health. Helena has an MFA in Creative Writing from Warren Wilson College in the US.

