

# Classroom Resources



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## Can't Say it Went to Plan

Gabrielle Tozer

### BOOK SUMMARY

School's out.

Forget study, exams and mapping out the future.

For the next seven days, the only homework is partying with friends, making new ones and living in the moment.

There are no parents or curfews – and no rules.

Zoë, Samira and Dahlia are strangers, but they have something in common: their plans for a dream holiday after their final year of school are flipped upside-down before they even arrive at the beach.

From hooking up and heartache, to growing apart, testing friendships and falling in love, anything can go down this week.

### KEY LEARNING OUTCOMES

- ACELA1551
- ACELT1635
- ACELT1773
- ACELY1742
- ACELA1564
- ACELT1812
- ACELT1642

### THEMES

- Friendship
- Belonging
- Mental Health
- Family
- Grief and Loss
- Identity
- Resilience

**Recommended Ages:** 14+

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## Before Reading

In her note from the author, Gabrielle Tozer says that *Can't Say it Went to Plan* is a 'love letter to those who make mistakes and dream big, even though it feels like nothing is going to plan and their inner monologue is raging at them to give up. Keep going.'

- Write the inner monologue that takes place during times in your life when nothing has felt like it's going to plan.
  - How would you describe this inner monologue? Is it positive and confident, or is it negative and unhelpful?
- Now write yourself a letter (or draw a picture, or make a meme – whatever works for you) about how you can overcome the situation and make your inner monologue more positive. Save it for the next time you feel that things are going haywire.

## After Reading

'Samira shakes her head, trying not to laugh out loud at the coincidence. That was the day she saw Zain with the redhead. The day she met Tilly and the Peachies. The day everything changed.' (p. 338)

- *Can't Say it Went to Plan* is all about figuring out who you are and making the most of chance encounters. List all of the chance encounters that the main characters experience in the novel.
- Select one of these encounters – not including the encounter between the three main characters at the end of the novel – and describe how it changes the course of the novel or the character's experience of their holiday.

What does real friendship look like? Samira struggles to think of the right thing to say when she's around Anoush and the others, but when she's with Tilly and the Peachies she speaks from the heart.

- Why is it important to stand up for your friends, even if they're not there?
  - Write about a time where you wish you'd spoken up, but didn't. What stopped you?
  - What would you say if you could relive that moment?
- Equally, it's important to stand up to your friends when they are doing or saying things that you believe are wrong. Why is this so much harder than standing up to people you don't know?

When Samira becomes the warrior, she feels braver but also free to be herself. Design a character that expresses who you are, and who you would like to be.

- What would they wear?
- Who would they be friends with?
- What would their special skill be?

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Zoë wants to go away with her friends to escape the enormous pressure she feels at living up to the weight of her parents' expectations.

- Is she right to think that they expect so much of her, or are some of these expectations ones that she imposes on herself?
- Zoë makes a lot of assumptions about the feelings of other people, including her parents and sister. How does she come to see them differently across the course of the novel?
- Make a word cloud of as many words that you can think of that describe the pressures on teenagers today.
  - Compare your cloud to other people's clouds, and highlight or underline the words that your cloud has in common with theirs.
- How do you deal with stress or pressure in your life? In small groups brainstorm a list of healthy ways to deal with stress.

Dahlia, Kiko and Florence are best friends, but as Dahlia struggles to come to terms with her grief at losing Stevie, Kiko and Florence don't always know how to help her.

- A lot of online mental health services (including Beyond Blue and Headspace) have resources and advice on how to help a friend in need. Do some research and make a list of ways that you can help when someone you care about is going through a rough time.
- Write about a time that someone has helped you through a rough patch.
- Make a list (like Dahlia's top 5) of people you could turn to if you are struggling with a situation, person or event.

Why do you think Gabrielle Tozer, the author of *Can't Say it Went to Plan*, chose to tell the story from the perspective of three characters who didn't know each other?

- What do the three characters have in common, before, during and after the events of the novel?
- How do you feel about the moments where their paths cross?
- What does this narrative choice tell you about the different ways that people can respond to the same (or similar) moment in time?
- How have each of the characters grown during the events of *Can't Say it Went to Plan*?

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## About the Author

Gabrielle Tozer is an award-winning author and freelance writer based in regional New South Wales. She has published six books, including the young adult novels *Remind Me How This Ends*, *Faking It* and *The Intern*, which won the 2015 State Library of Victoria's Gold Inky Award. Her first picture book, *Peas and Quiet* (illustrated by Sue deGennaro), was published in 2017, as was her young adult short story 'The Feeling From Over Here' (featured in *Begin, End, Begin: A #LoveOzYA Anthology*). Gabrielle's debut children's novel, *Melody Trumpet*, hit shelves in 2019. *Can't Say it Went to Plan* is her latest young adult novel, and she is currently working on her next project. Gabrielle loves sharing her passion for storytelling and creativity with readers and aspiring writers, and has appeared at numerous events including the Sydney Writers' Festival, the Somerset Festival of Literature and the Children's Book Council of Australia's national conference. Say hello: [gabrielletozer.com](http://gabrielletozer.com)

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