

DIGGER AND ME

by Ros Roberts

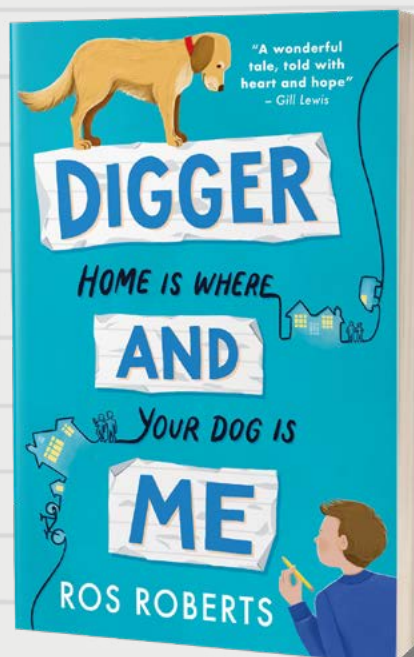


*Where do I feel at home?
When I'm sitting with my dog, Digger.*

James splits his life between his mum's and his dad's houses. It's far from perfect. Especially now Dad doesn't have time for bike rides with him any more and Mum's always with her new boyfriend. The constant is Digger, his dog and best friend. He's the glue that holds the two halves of James's life together.

So when James finds a lump on Digger's leg, everything changes. Digger is the one he can talk to about anything. But when it's Digger he needs to talk about, where can he turn?

A touching story about family, friendship and finding your voice, for readers of Jacqueline Wilson, Lisa Thompson and I, COSMO.



DIGGER AND ME

ROS ROBERTS

Chapter:

Monday 4th June

Comprehension Questions

- What does James not like?
- Who is Mr Froggatt? What impression do you get of him from this chapter?
- How does he show that he doesn't know James very well?
- Why do you think James lies about liking football?
- What does it mean when Jack says 'I don't do poems, sir'?
- Why does Digger's tail go crazy when he sees James?
- What do you think Mr Froggatt will do with the postcard-sized pieces of paper?

Writing Opportunities

Write a paragraph describing the things you like.
Why do you like them?

Cross-Curricular Activities

ART • On a postcard-sized piece of paper, draw, take a photograph or create a collage of something that makes you smile like James has to do for Mr Froggatt.



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Chapter:
Tuesday 5th June

Comprehension Questions

- Why doesn't Mr Froggatt turn around from the whiteboard when he speaks to Philip?
- How would you describe Philip in this chapter?
- Which football teams do the boys include in their Venn diagrams?
- Who does Mr Froggatt support?
- Why does Philip have a lot of mud on his hands?
- When Mum says 'That's friendship. You have to give and take', what does it mean to give and take?
- How is the relationship between James and Tomaz different from his mum's relationship with Gena?
- Write a setting description about what it feels like to be in the classroom with James, his classmates and Mr Froggatt.

Writing Opportunities

Write a paragraph describing the things you like.
Why do you like them?

Cross-Curricular Activities

MATHS • Compare and contrast the similarities and differences between James and Mr Froggatt using a Venn diagram.

Extension: Add in another character of your choice to your Venn diagram to challenge yourself.



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Chapter:

Wednesday 6th June

Comprehension Questions

- How does James think he needs to prepare for high school?
- Why does Mum check if James's headache has gone before he goes to his dad's?
- What is 'kibble'?
- What is the relationship like between James and his step-dad Dave?
- How is Kathy described? What can you infer about her character?
- How does Kathy feel about Digger?

Writing Opportunities

Write a short poem about your home, thinking carefully about the pattern or rhyme in the poems. Use the poem 'My Home' by James as a source of inspiration.

Cross-Curricular Activities

GEOGRAPHY • Use maps of the local area and software like Google Earth to locate the school, homes and significant local buildings near to you to help children to become more familiar with their locality.

ENGLISH • Write a letter to someone at home and post after learning their address including postcode.



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Chapter: *Thursday 7th June*

Comprehension Questions

- Why are Thursday mornings tricky?
- How do you think Dad is feeling about Dave in the beginning of this chapter when he drops James home?
- What new information do we learn about Dave's job? How does James feel towards Dave in this chapter?
- What does James compare the size of Margo's brain to?
- Why for the first time doesn't he mind when Dave uses the word 'we'?
- What do they find on Digger? How does it change the mood of the story?
- Who is Uncle Bobby and what was the 'start of it all' with him?

Writing Opportunities

Write the events of the chapter from Mum's perspective. Think about the different emotions she experiences and her interactions with James, Digger and Dave.

Cross-Curricular Activities

PSHE • Begin a discussion about what the lump James has found is, its links to cancer and tumours and the importance of awareness and early detection. Be sensitive towards children's emotional wellbeing during these discussions.



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Chapter:
Friday 8th June

Comprehension Questions

- What makes James's stomach churn?
- Why is the memory of the red jumper too much for Mum?
- Do you feel any sympathy for James when he explains why everything is not alright?
- What does it mean to have pet insurance?
- How does Mum react when she sees the cost of the treatment for Digger? Why?
- How would you describe the mood in the car between James and Mum?
- How does Mum show she is annoyed at Dad at the end of this chapter? What does she mean when she says, 'And maybe I'm Cinderella'?

Writing Opportunities

Write down five questions that you would ask the vet about Digger if you were James.

Cross-Curricular Activities

PSHE • Learn more about the job of a vet and what it takes to be one.

ENGLISH • 'Poems have no rules,' says Mr Froggatt. Do you agree? Discuss some of the different types of poems you know and whether or not they have rules to follow. Why do you think Mr Froggatt tells the children that poems have no rules?



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Chapter: *Saturday 9th June*

Comprehension Questions

- Whose idea is going to the pet shop?
- Why is it odd that James uses Dave's name to call him?
- How does the author create tension between Mum and Dave in this chapter? When does this tension disappear?
- Where is Mum's happy place?
- What is a 'movie dinner'?
- How do you think James might feel about Dave in this chapter? How is their relationship growing?
- Why does Mum make Dave change the film with the trailer with a huge ball of fire in it?

Writing Opportunities

Rewrite the events of this chapter from the perspective of Dave.

Cross-Curricular Activities

SCIENCE • In this chapter, camouflage is talked about. Find out why animals and plants have camouflage. Design an animal that is camouflaged against a given habitat.

Extension: Make camouflaged masks or camouflage yourselves against different backgrounds. Which colours are the most effective?



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Chapter:

Sunday 10th June

Comprehension Questions

- Why is this chapter only one page long?
- What is the poem about in this chapter?
- Where is the flea?
- Where is the other flea?
- What is the simile used to compare the spider to?
- How do you think a vet would find a stick insect's heart?
- What is the pattern of rhyme in this poem?

Writing Opportunities

Write a short poem on the topic of insects. Which ones do you like or dislike? What characteristics can you include?

Cross-Curricular Activities

SCIENCE • Learn more about insects and minibeasts. Using an identification and spotter sheet, record which insects live in your school grounds. Research how different insects are adapted to suit their environment in different ways.



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Chapter:

Monday 11th June

Comprehension Questions

- Where is the normal place that Mum stands to collect James after school?
- Why hasn't Mum told Dad about Digger yet?
- What does Mum want to get from the butchers for tea?
- Why do you think that Mum initially says that a week is fine for the results and refuses to pay extra to have them early?
- What makes her change her mind?
- How do you think James is feeling at this point in the story?
- Why does James prefer Charlie to Dave?

Writing Opportunities

Write a character profile for James including all the information that you know and anything you can infer about him so far.

Cross-Curricular Activities

SCIENCE • Discuss the different types of dog breeds like the ones mentioned in this chapter. Discover how different dogs are crossbred to make new breeds like a labradoodle and a cockapoo.

COMPUTING • Create a presentation and profile about your favourite dog breed.



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Chapter:
Tuesday 12th June

Comprehension Questions

- Why do James and Tomaz think that Mr Froggatt is nervous doing the assembly?
- What is a privilege that the Year 6 children have in assembly?
- Why does Mr Froggatt choose Philip to be one of his helpers?
- What words are used to describe each of the shoes and Mr Froggatt's friends? How does he compare them to each other?
- Why does the assembly make Freya think? What does this show about her character?
- What is a 'rodent pest'?
- How does the author use humour in this chapter when describing why James thinks the pool needs cleaning?

Writing Opportunities

Write a paragraph comparing someone you know to a shoe of your choice. What qualities can you compare between them?

Cross-Curricular Activities

PSHE • Write a short reflection emphasizing the importance of friendship and loyalty. Give examples of how you can be a good friend and the positive impact your kind actions can have on others.

PSHE • Note down at least three qualities that make James a good friend to Tomaz. Do the same for why Tomaz is good for James.



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Chapter:

Wednesday 13th June

Comprehension Questions

- How is the mood of this chapter set from the very first line?
- Why does James repeat the word 'wrong' at the beginning of this chapter? What is the effect of this?
- What is a 'malignant tumour'?
- How does James know that Mum is close to crying?
- Why does James feel bad after the phone call with his dad?
- What does James mean when he describes himself as being like a 'chess piece'?
- Why does he only write 'I hate cancer'? What advice would you give him if you could?

Writing Opportunities

Write a reflection from James's perspective about the events in this chapter. Focus particularly on his complicated feelings surrounding Digger, Mum, Dave, Dad and Kathy.

Cross-Curricular Activities

SCIENCE • As a class, carry out more research around the topic of cancer. Learn more about how it affects cells in your body and the treatment people can experience to help to fight it. You could even fundraise as a class or as a school to raise money for a cancer charity.



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Chapter:

Thursday 14th June

Comprehension Questions

- What is 'bangers and mash'?
- What would James buy if he had loads and loads of cash?
- What food would James have every single day?
- Which foods would he like to ditch?
- What does he mean when he says 'the only loot' at the end of the poem?
- What is the rhyme scheme of this poem?
- Why do you think this chapter is only one page long?

Writing Opportunities

Write a poem with an AABB rhyming pattern like James does in his poem about food.

Cross-Curricular Activities

ENGLISH • Learn more about rhyme schemes within poems and how they are represented using the letters A and B.



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Chapter:

Friday 15th June

Comprehension Questions

- India loves to share her poems and goes on and on. What does this show about her character?
- What type of poem does Raj perform? Who helped him with it?
- What kind of clothing does Mr Froggatt want to get after reading Eva's poem?
- What is Mum talking about with Jacinda? Why does she keep it a secret from James?
- How does the author show that there is some tension between Mum and Dad with the words used? Why does the word 'good' not fit in the sentence about his birthday?
- Why does Gran say that Dad hates cheese? Why is he so keen to go and get some for his birthday party? How does this chapter show the character of Dad is changing?
- Why does Dad ask Kathy to stop doing that judging thing?

Writing Opportunities

Write a diary entry from Kathy's perspective detailing the events of Digger disturbing the party in this chapter.

Cross-Curricular Activities

SPEAKING & LISTENING • Prepare and share a poem with the class like the children do in the book. Record your poem and peer-assess each other's poems considering clarity, expression, volume and body language.



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Chapter:

Saturday 16th June

Comprehension Questions

- Why is Tomaz stirring?
- Why does Kathy's house look different with all the bottles and mess everywhere?
- Why do you think Mikey and Jez behave in this way towards James and Tomaz?
- How do you think the characters of Mikey and Jez might influence the story going forwards?
- How does James's dad act differently when Kathy is not around? Why?
- Do you think James's dad is being more sincere to James or Kathy? Explain your ideas.
- Why does James need a new helmet?

Writing Opportunities

Write a one-paragraph summary of the events in this chapter and why they are important.

Cross-Curricular Activities

MATHS • Dad mentions 'interest-free credit' when talking about buying the bikes. Learn more about what interest is and how it relates to financial education. Calculate amounts of money borrowed using interest and percentages.



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Chapter:
Sunday 17th June

Comprehension Questions

- Why does James feel that everything he does with Dad is now about 'all of us'? What does this mean?
- Why does Kathy seem more ready for cycling after seeing her friends there?
- How do James and his dad feel after Kathy tells them to upgrade their helmet choices?
- What causes Dad to stomp off towards the car?
- How does Kathy help James with Mikey and Jez? Why is this a surprise to James?
- Why doesn't James tell Dad about his helmet?
- Is there anything James could or should have done differently in this situation?

Writing Opportunities

Write the next part of the story, predicting what happens when Dad discovers that Mikey and Jez stole James's helmet.

Cross-Curricular Activities

PSHE • Have a discussion about road safety and safety whilst out cycling with friends on the road. Talk more about why it is important to wear a helmet and how it protects the cyclist.



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Chapter:

Monday 18th June

Comprehension Questions

- Why would Philip have gone back to get James's helmet?
- Why does James not want to touch the strap of the helmet?
- What did Mr Froggatt spend his weekend doing?
- How is James's opinion of Kathy changing through the story?
- Why might Jack not want to do the poem about his house?
Which one does he want to write?
- Why does James think that Dave is plumbing for the queen
when he goes out in a new shirt and wearing aftershave?
- Who does James choose to write about for his important person poem?

Writing Opportunities

Write a poem about an important person of your choice. Why is this person important to you? Will your poem use a rhyming scheme?

Cross-Curricular Activities

HISTORY • Research and create a fact file about a significant person from history. Why are they important? What have they achieved? Share what you learn together.



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Chapter:

Tuesday 19th June

Comprehension Questions

- What is different about the journey to swimming this time?
- What does it mean to have 'full marks'?
- Who does James say he can trust? Should he trust Charlie?
- What are 'lymph nodes'?
- Do you think Mum is thinking about Dad and the tough meat when she comments about the pub being a nice place?
- Why does Tomaz pass James his biscuit?
- How does the writer create a sense of silliness between the boys at the end of this chapter?

Writing Opportunities

Create a character profile for Mum based on what you have learned about her so far.

Cross-Curricular Activities

SCIENCE • Learn more about the systems of the body such as the circulatory, skeletal and digestive systems. Find out what lymph nodes are and how they contribute to the immune and lymphatic systems within the body.



DIGGER AND ME

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Chapter:

Wednesday 20th June

Comprehension Questions

- What hilarious simile does Dave use to describe what Gena is wearing?
- What causes James to retch? What does it mean to retch?
- What does it show about Dave and Dad's characters when they talk together about starter motors?
- What does Digger have on his back after being in Dave's van?
- Why doesn't James like it when Digger shows he is happy to see Kathy?
- Why does Kathy ask James if he has his helmet back?

Writing Opportunities

Write a continuation of this chapter, describing what you think happens next when Kathy discovers the grease on her jeans.

Cross-Curricular Activities

ART • Draw an illustration of what Gena looks like in her outfit that is compared to a giant traffic cone by Dave.



DIGGER AND ME

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Chapter:

Thursday 21st June

Comprehension Questions

- What has Mum burnt?
- What does she mean when she says 'it's not an exciting tea'?
- What would you describe as an exciting tea?
- Why might it be unusual for Dave to be wearing a tie when he is a plumber?
- How does James know that Mum wants to let rip at him? What does 'letting rip' mean?
- How does the chapter end?

Writing Opportunities

Imagine you are Mum and Dave whispering in the hall. Write the conversation between the two of them that they would be having in hushed tones. Remember to include correct punctuation like speech marks to show who is speaking.

Cross-Curricular Activities

DRAMA • Work with a partner to act out the conversation between Mum and Dave in the hall. What would they say to each other? How would they say it? Think about their facial expressions, use of volume in their voices and body language.



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Chapter:

Friday 22nd June

Comprehension Questions

- Why does the class have a different teacher to Mr Froggatt today? What is her name?
- How do we know that James misses Mr Froggatt?
- Why does James think that Miss Brown has been teaching for a long time?
- How is Miss Brown different to Mr Froggatt?
- Why does it feel like she is stealing when she picks up their poetry books?
- Why is it wrong when she marks the poetry?
- Why does James think that Miss Brown should be the one feeling sorry and not India?

Writing Opportunities

Imagine you are one of the classmates. Write a diary entry of what it would have felt like being in the classroom that day with Miss Brown compared to usually being with Mr Froggatt.

Cross-Curricular Activities

SPEAKING AND LISTENING • Debate whether you think it was right for Miss Brown to start sharing the children's poems without their consent. Should she have done this? Learn more about the act of privacy and how you can respect people's privacy.



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Chapter:
Saturday 23rd June

Comprehension Questions

- How are things starting to look better for Digger?
- Why does James feel sentimental towards the banging fence panel?
- Which level did Tomaz reach in his game?
- What is the 'den' at Tomaz's house?
- Why does the author choose to include the detail about Tomaz's sister in this chapter?
- Why does James choose the top bunk?
- What are some of the sounds of Tomaz's house?

Writing Opportunities

Rewrite this chapter from the point of view of Tomaz.
How would it be different?

Cross-Curricular Activities

ART • Based on Tomaz's den, design your own den.
What would you choose to have in it?



DIGGER AND ME

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Chapter:
Sunday 24th June

Comprehension Questions

- Why does James 'yank' his bag out of the car with him?
What does this verb show about his movements?
- How is the garden different from the last time that James saw it?
- Can you describe the new garden in three words? Share your ideas with a partner.
- How does James cope with change?
- How does Digger show he knows that James is upset?

Writing Opportunities

Summarize in a sentence how James might be feeling during this chapter. Use evidence from the text to explain your thinking.

Cross-Curricular Activities

ART • Draw what you think the garden looks like now and what it looked like before.



DIGGER AND ME

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Chapter:

Monday 25th June

Comprehension Questions

- What do you think Mr Froggatt and India may be talking about on his return to the classroom?
- Why does Mr Froggatt blame himself for the way Miss Brown acted? What does this show about his character?
- Why does everything feel normal with Mr Froggatt?
- How does Mum make a 'grand point' about Dad being late?
- How does James feel about the high school on his visit?
- How does James react when he sees the toilets? Why?

Writing Opportunities

Write a report detailing what you think a day at high school would be like.

Cross-Curricular Activities

COMPUTING • Make a video report about what a day in your current year group is like for the next year group. Be sure to include key information about roles and responsibilities to help with their transition.



DIGGER AND ME

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Chapter:

Tuesday 26th June

Comprehension Questions

- Why is Tomaz's mum so interested in their spelling scores?
- What causes James to feel really sick, hot and like he can't breathe?
- How is James going to tell his mum about Dave? Is he right to tell her or could he have got things wrong?
- Do you think James should do a 'mighty reveal' in front of Sean?
- What does it mean to be 'shattered'?
- How do we know by James's body language that he is worried?
- Describe a time you have had to reveal something. How did it feel? Were you right?

Writing Opportunities

Write a paragraph predicting what happens next. Does James speak to his mum? Does he do the mighty reveal?

Cross-Curricular Activities

DRAMA • In pairs, one child takes on the role of James and one child takes on the role of questioner. Hotseat the character of James to find out how he felt at the moment he saw Dave with the mystery woman. Once complete, swap roles.



DIGGER AND ME

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Chapter:

Wednesday 27th June

Comprehension Questions

- How does James feel when he realizes that Mr Froggatt changed his plans for him?
- Why does James suspect that something is instantly not right when he sees that Dad has come to collect him from school?
- How did Digger get an appointment with the specialist cancer vet?
- What is radiotherapy?
- Why does Dad seem like he has a problem when he arrives back home to see Kathy's car parked on the road outside?
- How does the author create a sense of empathy for Kathy in this chapter?

Writing Opportunities

Summarize Kathy's character now in three words. Compare them with three adjectives you would have chosen to describe her character earlier on in the story.

Cross-Curricular Activities

DRAMA • Role play the scene with Mr Froggatt and James. What is the impact of each character's actions? What do you think each character is feeling and why?

Extension: Now do this again with the characters of Dad and James. Are there any similarities?



DIGGER AND ME

ROS ROBERTS

Chapter:

Thursday 28th June

Comprehension Questions

- What kind of noise would James have made to let his mum know that he was listening?
- How does Sean react to the accident with Digger?
- What kind of impression do you get of Sean in this chapter?
- How does Digger show he is frightened of Sean?
- Who has Dave been spending time with? Why?
- Who cancelled the insurance? Why might they do something like this?
- How has the relationship between Dave and James changed for the better?

Writing Opportunities

Rewrite this chapter from the point of view of Sean. Show clearly his anger when reacting to Digger.

Cross-Curricular Activities

DRAMA • In small groups, re-enact the chaotic accident scene. Freeze frame at different points and reflect on what each character is feeling.

MUSIC • Use music to soundtrack the dramatic events of this chapter.



DIGGER AND ME

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Chapter: ONE WEEK LATER Friday 6th July

Comprehension Questions

- How does Dave show he is affectionate towards Digger?
- How does James know it is his dad when he arrives in his car outside?
- Why is there an ellipsis used in the sentence 'Kathy and I had a bit of a ... disagreement?' How does this add suspense?
- What is the present that James gives to his dad?
- Why is the red jumper so significant in the story?
- What type of food do James and his dad get on the way home?
- How would you describe James's dad's driving style? Does this add anything to his character?

Writing Opportunities

Write a description of the scene of the four characters – James, Digger, Mum and Dad – sitting in the car together. How does it feel?

Cross-Curricular Activities

LITERACY • For each of the main characters in the story, write a sentence summarizing what they have learned about themselves.

ART • Illustrate what you think one of the main characters looks like now you have learned a lot about them.



DIGGER AND ME

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Chapter:

TWO WEEKS LATER

Friday 20th July

Comprehension Questions

- What is the mood like inside the classroom on the last day?
- What gift does Mr Froggatt receive from the class? What does Mr Froggatt receive from Philip?
- How does the poem that the children complete show more about what they are like as people?
- Why is James jealous of the next year's Year 6 class?
- What does Mr Froggatt mean when he tells James he must 'carry on writing'?
- How does James show his feelings towards Dave?
- How has everything returned to normal for James at the end of the story?

Writing Opportunities

- Can you write an alternative ending to the story?
- Write a review of the book. Try to summarize the whole story in fewer than 100 words.

Cross-Curricular Activities

PSHE • Talk about changes and moving on in relation to children moving up school year groups. How might they feel?

ENGLISH • Ask children to share which themes they feel are most important in the story and why.



DIGGER AND ME

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*Where do I feel at home?
When I'm sitting with my dog, Digger.*

James splits his life between his mum's and his dad's houses. It's far from perfect. Especially now Dad doesn't have time for bike rides with him any more and Mum's always with her new boyfriend. The constant is Digger, his dog and best friend. He's the glue that holds the two halves of James's life together.

So when James finds a lump on Digger's leg, everything changes. Digger is the one he can talk to about anything. But when it's Digger he needs to talk about, where can he turn?

A touching story about family, friendship and finding your voice, for readers of Jacqueline Wilson, Lisa Thompson and I, COSMO.



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Creative writing prompts

Write a poem!

Digger and Me is full of poems by James and his classmates. His teacher, Mr Froggatt, gives the class lots of starting points to inspire them. Using one of the prompts from the book, try writing your own poem. Remember there are no rules to writing poetry – it doesn't have to rhyme or be a certain length – you just have to have fun!

Write your own movie trailer!

James loves to play with movie trailer ideas. He takes very ordinary situations and turns them into movie trailers!

Coming soon ... to a big screen near you... James, aged nine, helpless, alone, desperate ... took on the beast that is ... duh ... duh... duhhhhh ... blue nail polish! (p148)

Write, record or perform a movie trailer based on something you do as part of your morning routine before school. It could be brushing your teeth, eating your cereal, or even walking to school.

Write your own movie script!

Read the tagline of the movie that Mum agrees they can watch on the 'movie dinner' night.

Two worlds at war. Two robots programmed to kill. Two humans with a crime to avenge... (p81)

With a friend, write a short script for a scene in the film. Maybe the two robots could be hatching a plan? Are they good or bad? They could be in a laboratory or in space or in a volcano crater or at the beach eating ice-cream ... it's up to you!



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Creative writing prompts

Write a movie review!

James and Dave and Mum talk about which film to watch. One of the films they discuss is called *The Diplodocus Returns*.

The Diplodocus ... extinct ... forever. Not one left on the island. Until now ... until today ... until the discovery of one remaining egg ... still warm. (p80)

Can you write a movie summary of what you think this film might be about? Imagine you are writing it for a newspaper review. Is it a great movie or a terrible one?

Write a diary entry by a cat!

Imagine you are one of the cats that had a nasty run in with the cat from Mr Froggatt's poem, *Scarred Tom* (pp93-95). Are you Daisy with a limp or Boots who now has a bandaged tail? Or you could make up a whole new cat. Write a diary entry about what happened. Try and include a great rescue story – how did you escape *Scarred Tom* in the end?

Write a story about a secret agent!

James uses the giant red dinosaur to imagine he is a secret agent, on a mission to save the world (p30)! He wonders if under the bad words on the dinosaur's neck, there is a coded message. The message opens the dino's neck and he slips into a world of hidden passages and muddy caverns with a pile of gadgets. Can you continue this story? Or you could write the story as if it's happening to you. You're at the pub having lunch with your family and you climb the dinosaur and find the coded message yourself...



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Creative writing prompts

Write as Digger!

Take one of the following scenes from the book and write the story as if Digger was telling it.

- The first trip to the vet's to get the lump checked out (pp65-70)
- The party – start when Tomaz goes to the toilet and Digger escapes (pp119-128)
- The park incident with Mikey and Jez (pp130-132)
- The ice-cream trip with Dad – start at school when Dad picks James up (pp200-206)
- The big reveal scene at the end with Dave, Mum and James. Start at the dinner table eating the meal and end it when James goes upstairs and Digger is left in the kitchen alone (pp216-223)

