

DUNGZILLA

JAMES FOLEY

ISBN (PB): 9781925164831

YEAR LEVEL: Y2–6

CROSS-CURRICULUM PRIORITY: Sustainability

ABOUT THE BOOK

Sally Tinker – the world’s foremost inventor under the age of twelve – is back. Her latest invention, the Resizerator, is capable of enlarging or shrinking any object! But when she tries demonstrating on a slice of pizza, she accidentally enlarges a tiny beetle to scary proportions. As the hungry critter rolls itself a dung ball large enough to crush the town, Sally and her friends must race to save the day!

A hilarious graphic novel for young readers.

ABOUT THE AUTHOR

James Foley is a children’s author and illustrator. His books include *In The Lion*, *The Amity Kids Adventures*, *The Last Viking*, *The Last Viking Returns*, *My Dead Bunny* and *Brobot*.

James is an ambassador for Books In Homes and Room to Read Australia, and the Regional Advisor for SCBWI Australia West. His interests include comics, film, psychology, science, history (anything nerdy really), as well as yoga and social justice. He has far too many books in his bedside reading pile.

THEMES

- Invention
- Design and technology
- Family
- Friendship
- Responsibility
- Sustainability

AUSTRALIAN CURRICULUM OUTCOMES

Y2–6 English

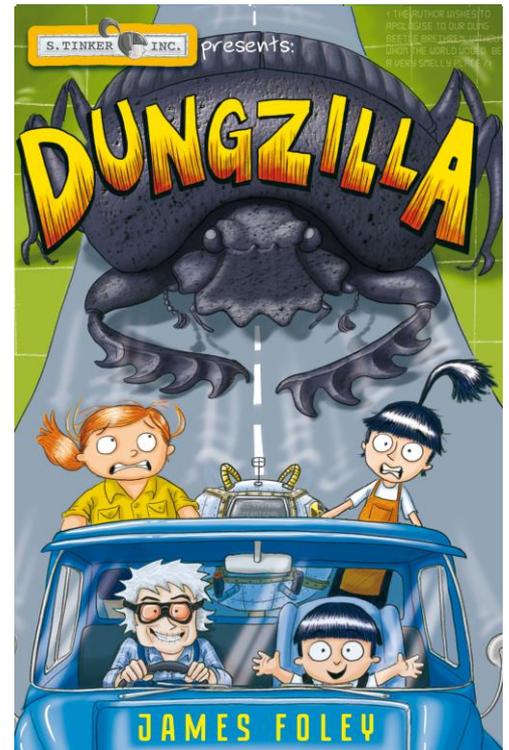
Y2–6 Biological Sciences; Physics

Y2–6 Design and Technologies

Y2–6 Visual Art

USEFUL WEBSITES

- Author website: jamesfoley.com.au
- Author blog: jamesfoley.com.au/blog
- Twitter: twitter.com/James_R_Foley
- Instagram: [instagram.com/James_R_Foley](https://www.instagram.com/James_R_Foley)
- Facebook: [facebook.com/jamesfoleyillustrations](https://www.facebook.com/jamesfoleyillustrations)



CLASSROOM IDEAS

Discussion questions

1. What is a graphic novel? How are its structure and layout different to a chapter book? Use a Venn diagram to compare and contrast these two forms of storytelling. Which do you prefer?
2. Sally introduces her friend Charli as a biologist.
 - a. What do biologists study?
 - b. What does Charli explain is the difference between a bug and a beetle?
 - c. Why were scarab beetles sacred in Ancient Egypt?
3. View Charli's diagram *Scarabaeus sacer*. Are there any words you don't recognise (e.g. antennae, celestial, thorax, abdomen)? In pairs, use an appropriate online dictionary to find the meaning.
4. Charli refers to *an all-natural, environmentally friendly solution*.
 - a. What does *environmentally-friendly* mean?
 - b. Why are environmentally friendly solutions important? What role do they play in sustainability?
 - c. What sustainable living methods do you use in your house or school?
5. Sally is *the world's foremost inventor under the age of twelve*.
 - a. Research a famous inventor from history and write a short biography of their achievements (e.g. Thomas Edison, Katharine Blodgett, Alexander Graham Bell, Grace Hopper).
 - b. List five inventions that were created in the last twenty years.
6. Look carefully at Sally's diagram *The Resizerator*. Are there any words you don't recognise (e.g. atomic, inflation, deflation, magnitude, manipulation, immense, proportions, status, accelerator, nuclear)? In pairs, use an appropriate online dictionary to find the meaning.
7. What is a *sewage farm* and why do you think Douglas flies there?
8. Why does Nan call Douglas 'Dungzilla'? (Hint: Do you know the story about a giant monster in Japan?)
9. How are the themes of family, friendship and responsibility important in this story?
10. How does the author use humour in *Dungzilla* to engage the reader? What's the funniest scene?

Creative writing – graphic novels

1. If you could design and build your own technology for any purpose, what would it be?
 - a. Draw a diagram on grid paper (like Sally's) and label its dimensions, materials and features.
 - b. Create an A3 comic book strip about your first day of using your new creation. What unforeseen design flaws might it have? What errors could occur?
2. How many examples of alliteration can you find in *Dungzilla* (e.g. *meadow muffins*, *mucky monstrosity*)? What is their effect when read aloud? Incorporate alliteration in your comic book (Q1).

Art – book illustration

1. Is James Foley's illustration style realistic or cartoon? What do you like about this style? Where has he positioned objects on each page? How are the images framed?
2. How does James Foley convey the characters' thoughts and feelings? Find a page where one of the characters looks: excited, irritated, scared, proud, curious, innocent.
3. Choose your favourite scene from the story and design it anew. Use the 'Cartooning worksheet for primary students' available from Foley's blog to help you draw facial expressions:
https://jamesfoleyillustrations.files.wordpress.com/2013/05/faces_part_1.pdf

Design and technologies

1. Can you design and construct a new invention out of recycled materials? In teams of four, you will need to build, test, evaluate and modify your invention based on your customer (peer) feedback. Who will be the newest employee at S. Tinker Inc.?
2. Design a name and logo for your own company – look at the logo for S. Tinker Inc. for inspiration.

Biological science

1. Create a labelled diagram of an insect of your choice just like Charli does (not a scarab beetle). Use the following subheadings to research and write a pamphlet about your insect: scientific name, diet, habitat, life cycle, interesting facts.
2. What role do insects play in our ecosystem? What would happen if there were no dung beetles to recycle waste?

INTERVIEW WITH THE AUTHOR

Where did the idea for Dungzilla come from?

I took myself on a writing retreat about 13–14 years ago. I was working on some random story ideas, and an image popped into my head of a giant dung beetle rolling a giant dung ball towards a town. It was like one of those B-grade monster movies, only with dung. I kept the idea in a tiny old notebook, waiting for the right time – then Sally Tinker and Joe turned up in the last few years, and the *Dungzilla* idea clicked.

What kind of research must an author undertake for a book about a dung beetle?

What kind? The gross kind. I watched lots of YouTube videos about dung beetles. I read books and webpages and scientific studies about dung beetles. I contacted a dung beetle expert via the Australian Museum to ask questions about dung beetles. Luckily I didn't have to go catching any dung beetles!

What was your favourite Dungzilla scene to illustrate and why?

I'm not sure I can pick one favourite – there are quite a few that made me giggle as I drew them. Mostly they were the ones with Mr Eaton, the local sewage farmer. He gets into a heap of trouble in this book.

What was the hardest scene to illustrate and why?

There were a lot of tricky things to draw. Nan's truck and Sally's Resizenator were difficult, as I had to draw them from lots of different angles. It was also hard to keep the scale of things consistent, particularly towards the end of the book when lots of things (and people) become supersized.

Sally Tinker is an inventor. Why are characters who love science important in kids' books?

Because science is one of our greatest assets (along with the arts). We need to encourage kids to think creatively and critically about the world around them.

What's next for Sally Tinker?

I don't know – I've got six or seven random ideas for future misadventures. I'll have to ask Sally which story should happen next.

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