

Trajectory

By Jane McGinnes

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DEDICATION

To my drama students, whose joyous chaos inspires me to write.

STORY OF THE PLAY

Trajectory follows “The Solar Flares,” a middle school rocket team, as they prepare for the annual American Rocketry Contest. Guided by a chorus of Sassy Scientists, the students navigate friendship, family drama, and the high-stakes pressures of building and launching their dream rocket, Sheila! The play is ensemble driven with a flexible cast that blends comedy, drama, and science.

It showcases a wide range of students, with meaningful roles for every actor, and opportunities to reassign lines or expand the chorus. Minimal set and prop requirements make the play easy for drama teachers to produce, while creative staging invites student collaboration through movement, sound, and video projections.

Running time about 50 minutes.

ORIGINAL PRODUCTION

The first production was staged by the Middle School Drama Class of Sacramento Country Day School, Sacramento, California on January 14-16, 2026.

CAST OF CHARACTERS

(3 m, 6 w, 12+ flexible)

The Solar Flares Middle School Rocket Team:

ROSEMARY: The leader.

GRACE: Pi girl.

SADIE: The poet.

FLORENCE: The dreamer.

ESME: The artist.

VIN: (M) The new kid.

NIK: (M) The long-jumping filmmaker.

LEO AKA CHIPMUNK: (M) The goofball.

MS. KNESEVIC: Rocket Club mentor and retired Marine.

Chorus:

SASSY SCIENTISTS 1-5: Lines should be reassigned, shared, or spoken in unison at the director's discretion.

Ensemble:

NASA VOICEOVER

MEDIA

BROTHERS

PARENTS

GHOSTS

NEIGHBORS

TEAM SPONSOR

MISSION CONTROL

ALIENS

METEORS / PLANETS

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TIME

The Present

SETTING

A Middle School

SCENES

Prologue: Florence's Dream Launch

Part 1: Crew

Part 2: Mission

Part 3: Simulations

Part 4: Drag

Part 5: Recovery System

Part 6: Newton's Third Law of Motion

Part 7: Flight Tests

Part 8: Combustion Audience Participation:

(Nik & Vin, Sadie, Rosemary, Esme, & Chipmunk's Stories)

Part 9: Propellant

Part 10: The Final Launch

PRODUCTION NOTES

A minimalist approach is recommended. Simple staging elements such as stools, stage cubes, and a rolling whiteboard are used throughout the play to indicate the science lab, house, car, etc.

The script includes a segment of projected video. The footage does not need to be polished. Students are encouraged to create it themselves. If video projection is not available, a photo slideshow or other visual alternative may be used.

The play includes a section in which audience members choose the order of scenes. Directors are encouraged to use any method that works best for their space and cast (a spinning wheel or drawing from a hat).

There are references in the script to a previous Rocket Club teacher. These details were inspired by a specific teacher at our school who also provided our NASA voiceover. Directors are encouraged to adapt these references to reflect a teacher from their own school community.

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NASA VOICE: Florence's Dream Launch.

(AT RISE: Pulsing MUSIC. LIGHTS come up on FLORENCE sleeping at a desk. The chorus of SASSY SCIENTISTS enters and approaches her.)

SASSY SCIENTIST 3: Florence. Wake up.

SASSY SCIENTIST 4: It's launch day.

FLORENCE: What?

SASSY SCIENTIST 2: Get dressed.

SASSY SCIENTIST 1: Quick, get your suit on! *(Handing HER a NASA jumpsuit.)*

SASSY SCIENTIST 5: Your crew mates are waiting for you.

FLORENCE: No. I can't be late.

SASSY SCIENTIST 5: It's ok, Florence.

SASSY SCIENTIST 1: We're here to make sure you get to your destination.

FLORENCE: Who are you?

SASSY SCIENTIST 4: There's no time for that. Hurry. *(Zipping up the jumpsuit.)*

(The SASSY SCIENTISTS lead FLORENCE to the rest of her rocket TEAMMATES who are entering through the audience also in NASA jumpsuits. LIGHTS up on the MEDIA.)

MEDIA 1: It's a beautiful day here at the Kennedy Space Center.

MEDIA 2: Perfect conditions for a launch.

MEDIA 3: The Solar Flares are suited up and ready to go.

MEDIA 2: They are making a stop to acknowledge the crowd enroute to the launch pad.

MEDIA 3: Their whole school is here to show support.

STUDENTS: *(From the audience.)* We love you, Solar Flares!

MEDIA 1: Their families too—

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FAMILY MEMBER: *(From the audience.)* Johnny! Our daughter's going to space. Florence in space. I can't believe it.

FLORENCE: Mom? What's happening?

MEDIA 2: Even their sponsors.

SPONSOR: *(From the audience - tossing out fliers.)* Come to Bobby's Boba and get two for the price of one. Use the code "SolarFlaresRGreat"!

MEDIA 3: Viewers around the world are glued to the live stream.

MEDIA 1: Watching these teenage astronauts make history as the youngest humans in space--

MEDIA 3: Quite incredible!

(The ASTRONAUTS move to their rocket, a configuration of stage cubes. ENSEMBLE members become NASA Mission Control.)

CONTROL 1: T minus 2 minutes and counting.

CONTROL 2: Activate main engine start sequence.

CONTROL 3: Begin tank pressurization.

CONTROL 4: Activate onboard recorders.

CONTROL 2: Final umbilical checks complete.

CONTROL 1: All stations commence final poll for launch readiness.

CONTROL 2: Booster – go.

CONTROL 3: Guidance – go.

CONTROL 4: GNC - go.

CONTROL 1: EECOM – go.

CONTROL 4: Range is green. All clear to launch.

CREW: Roger that.

FAMILY MEMBER: *(From the audience.)* Florence is going to space! Can you believe it?

STUDENTS:*(Chanting from the audience.)* Solar Flares!
Solar Flares!

CONTROL 1: T-minus 10... 9... 8...7... 6 ...5

(SFX: Sudden loud insistent alarm and flashing red lights.)

End of Freeview

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