

PBS Lesson Series

# ELA, Grade 3, Lesson 7

Teacher Packet

# Rocket Girl

A Story of the  
Civil Rights Movement



## Vocabulary words

- **matinee**
- **serial**
- **commando**
- **mishap**
- **protest**
- **gathered**



# Rocket Girl

## A Story of the Civil Rights Movement



Jenny Davis got a new bike for Christmas 1959. A week later, on

her eleventh birthday, she got a basket for the bike. The next day, Jenny's father showed her the

newspaper "John F. Kennedy is running for president," he said. "If he wins, he will be the youngest president ever."

Jenny's father taught fifth grade. He always said that young people were the heart and soul of America.

The Davis family lived in Raeford, North Carolina. Raeford was a town of 2,000. Half the people were white and half were black. The family lived close to Main Street. Jenny and her father walked to school. "It's just a hop, skip, and a jump away," Mr. Davis liked to say.

One Saturday at the end of January, Jenny rode her new bike downtown. Jenny loved to go to the **matinee**, the afternoon movie. For twenty-five cents, she saw a movie and a serial adventure. The **serial** was a weekly short movie about a space hero named Commando Cody.

A **commando** is a member of a fighting team. "I wish I had a special rocket suit like Commando Cody," Jenny said to herself.



- matinee- an afternoon movie



# Rocket Girl

## A Story of the Civil Rights Movement



Jenny Davis got a new bike for Christmas 1959. A week later, on

her eleventh birthday, she got a basket for the bike. The next day, Jenny's father showed her the

newspaper "John F. Kennedy is running for president," he said. "If he wins, he will be the youngest president ever."

Jenny's father taught fifth grade. He always said that young people were the heart and soul of America.

The Davis family lived in Raeford, North Carolina. Raeford was a town of 2,000. Half the people were white and half were black. The family lived close to Main Street. Jenny and her father walked to school. "It's just a hop, skip, and a jump away," Mr. Davis liked to say.

One Saturday at the end of January, Jenny rode her new bike downtown. Jenny loved to go to the **matinee**, the afternoon movie. For twenty-five cents, she saw a movie and a serial adventure. The **serial** was a weekly short movie about a space hero named Commando Cody.

A **commando** is a member of a fighting team. "I wish I had a special rocket suit like Commando Cody," Jenny said to herself.



- serial- a weekly short movie



# Rocket Girl

## A Story of the Civil Rights Movement



Jenny Davis got a new bike for Christmas 1959. A week later, on

her eleventh birthday, she got a basket for the bike. The next day, Jenny's father showed her the

newspaper "John F. Kennedy is running for president," he said. "If he wins, he will be the youngest president ever."

Jenny's father taught fifth grade. He always said that young people were the heart and soul of America.

The Davis family lived in Raeford, North Carolina. Raeford was a town of 2,000. Half the people were white and half were black. The family lived close to Main Street. Jenny and her father walked to school. "It's just a hop, skip, and a jump away," Mr. Davis liked to say.

One Saturday at the end of January, Jenny rode her new bike downtown. Jenny loved to go to the **matinee**, the afternoon movie. For twenty-five cents, she saw a movie and a serial adventure. The **serial** was a weekly short movie about a space hero named Commando Cody.

A **commando** is a member of a fighting team. "I wish I had a special rocket suit like Commando Cody," Jenny said to herself.





- commando- a member of a fighting team



After the movies, Jenny rode her bike around town. It was a cool, breezy day. She rode like the wind, like Commando Cody flying off to fight the evil ruler. She rode past the school. She rode past the courthouse. She rode past the Woolworth's, the big store where she bought ice cream on hot days.

After the Woolworth's, the train tracks crossed Main Street.

She had never been there before. Except for the color of people's skin, things looked just about the same. She rode past apartment buildings just like the one she lived in.

Jenny wasn't looking where she was going. The bike hit a bump. *Bang!* Jenny fell. Her knees and elbows started to bleed. She tried to be brave, like Joan Gilbert, Commando Cody's assistant. When she saw her bent bike basket, though, she cried like a baby.

Three black people came to help: a man, his wife, and their daughter. The girl was also about eleven. She got a wet towel. The mom cleaned Jenny's knees and elbows. The man fixed Jenny's bike basket, bending it back into shape.

"Just like new," he said. It wasn't exactly like new, though, so all four of them laughed.

"A friend of ours has a truck," said the mom. "He could drive you and your bike home, lickety-split."



Jenny said, "No, thank you. I can ride. I just have to keep my eyes peeled."

Pretty soon, Jenny felt better and rode home. When she got home, she told her mom and dad about her **mishap**, or accident. But she did not say where it had happened.

- mishap- accident



The event described here actually happened in this place on this date. Historical accuracy is important for historical fiction.



What will Jenny do? We know that she is the main character—the Rocket Girl in the story title. Readers will want to keep reading to find out.

On Tuesday, February 2, the Greensboro newspaper had a big story. Greensboro was a city about 100 miles north of Raeford. Four young black men had gone into a Woolworth's the day before. They sat at the lunch counter! This caused a problem because the store had a whites-only rule. Black people could buy food to go. They were not supposed to sit down and eat there.

"The men did this as a protest," Jenny's father explained. "A **protest** is a way of showing that you do not agree with something. They do not agree with the whites-only rule at the lunch counter."

"I don't agree with it, either," Jenny said.

"Nor do I," said her dad. "It should be against the law. But that hasn't happened yet."

By Saturday, Jenny's knees and elbows were better. She rode her bike downtown. She saw a bunch of people outside the Raeford Woolworth's. She went inside.

About a dozen black people were sitting at the counter. It was as if the pictures in the newspaper had sprung to life.

"We're not having this in Hoke County," the store manager said. Soon, the sheriff and some other policemen walked in. They all were white. Their hands rested on their guns. People **gathered** outside, forming a crowd. Jenny's mom and dad heard what was happening. They ran downtown. They saw Jenny's bike outside Woolworth's.

Sitting at the lunch counter was the nice man who had fixed Jenny's bike basket. Jenny looked around and remembered some words her father had once used: "the calm before the storm." Jenny did not want a storm to come to this store.

What would Commando Cody do? Commando Cody had a dial on his suit that controlled his rockets. Jenny reached for her chest. She pretended that she had a dial, too. She turned the dial. She walked forward. She stood in front of the black people at the lunch counter and nodded politely.



The author mentioned Commando Cody early on as one of Jenny's heroes. That information helped establish Jenny's character. Now it becomes part of the plot.

- protest- a way of showing that you do not agree with something

The event described here actually happened in this place on this date. Historical accuracy is important for historical fiction.



What will Jenny do? We know that she is the main character—the Rocket Girl in the story title. Readers will want to keep reading to find out.

On Tuesday, February 2, the Greensboro newspaper had a big story. Greensboro was a city about 100 miles north of Raeford. Four young black men had gone into a Woolworth's the day before. They sat at the lunch counter! This caused a problem because the store had a whites-only rule. Black people could buy food to go. They were not supposed to sit down and eat there.

"The men did this as a protest," Jenny's father explained. "A **protest** is a way of showing that you do not agree with something. They do not agree with the whites-only rule at the lunch counter."

"I don't agree with it, either," Jenny said.

"Nor do I," said her dad. "It should be against the law. But that hasn't happened yet."

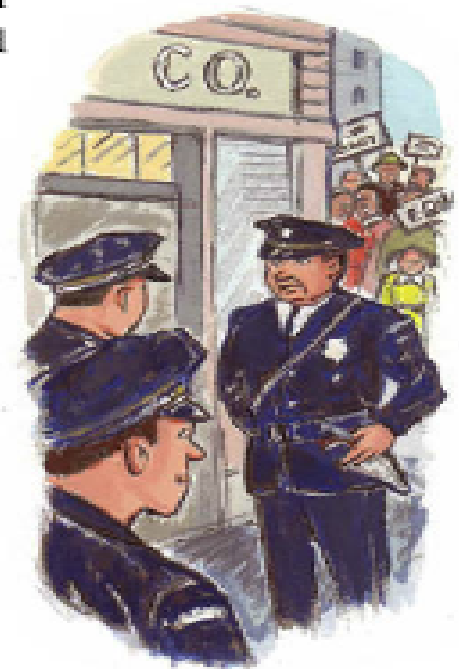
By Saturday, Jenny's knees and elbows were better. She rode her bike downtown. She saw a bunch of people outside the Raeford Woolworth's. She went inside.

About a dozen black people were sitting at the counter. It was as if the pictures in the newspaper had sprung to life.

"We're not having this in Hoke County," the store manager said. Soon, the sheriff and some other policemen walked in. They all were white. Their hands rested on their guns. People **gathered** outside, forming a crowd. Jenny's mom and dad heard what was happening. They ran downtown. They saw Jenny's bike outside Woolworth's.

Sitting at the lunch counter was the nice man who had fixed Jenny's bike basket. Jenny looked around and remembered some words her father had once used: "the calm before the storm." Jenny did not want a storm to come to this store.

What would Commando Cody do? Commando Cody had a dial on his suit that controlled his rockets. Jenny reached for her chest. She pretended that she had a dial, too. She turned the dial. She walked forward. She stood in front of the black people at the lunch counter and nodded politely.



The author mentioned Commando Cody early on as one of Jenny's heroes. That information helped establish Jenny's character. Now it becomes part of the plot.



- gathered- forming a crowd

The event described here actually happened in this place on this date. Historical accuracy is important for historical fiction.

On Tuesday, February 2, the Greensboro newspaper had a big story. Greensboro was a city about 100 miles north of Raeford. Four young black men had gone into a Woolworth's the day before. They sat at the lunch counter! This caused a problem because the store had a whites-only rule. Black people could buy food to go. They were not supposed to sit down and eat there.

"The men did this as a protest," Jenny's father explained. "A **protest** is a way of showing that you do not agree with something. They do not agree with the whites-only rule at the lunch counter."

"I don't agree with it, either," Jenny said.

"Nor do I," said her dad. "It should be against the law. But that hasn't happened yet."

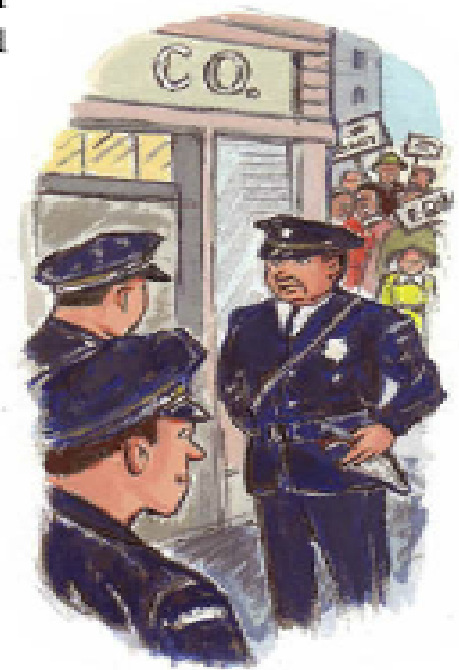
By Saturday, Jenny's knees and elbows were better. She rode her bike downtown. She saw a bunch of people outside the Raeford Woolworth's. She went inside.

About a dozen black people were sitting at the counter. It was as if the pictures in the newspaper had sprung to life.

"We're not having this in Hoke County," the store manager said. Soon, the sheriff and some other policemen walked in. They all were white. Their hands rested on their guns. People **gathered** outside, forming a crowd. Jenny's mom and dad heard what was happening. They ran downtown. They saw Jenny's bike outside Woolworth's.

Sitting at the lunch counter was the nice man who had fixed Jenny's bike basket. Jenny looked around and remembered some words her father had once used: "the calm before the storm." Jenny did not want a storm to come to this store.

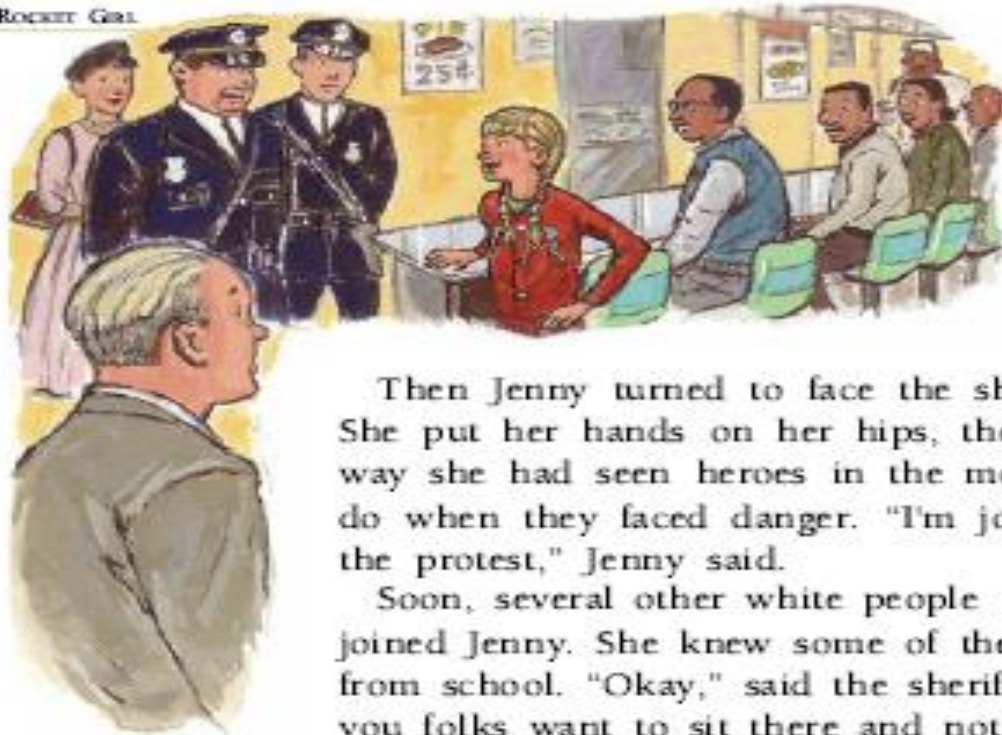
What would Commando Cody do? Commando Cody had a dial on his suit that controlled his rockets. Jenny reached for her chest. She pretended that she had a dial, too. She turned the dial. She walked forward. She stood in front of the black people at the lunch counter and nodded politely.



The author mentioned Commando Cody early on as one of Jenny's heroes. That information helped establish Jenny's character. Now it becomes part of the plot.



What will Jenny do? We know that she is the main character—the Rocket Girl in the story title. Readers will want to keep reading to find out.



Then Jenny turned to face the sheriff. She put her hands on her hips, the way she had seen heroes in the movies do when they faced danger. "I'm joining the protest," Jenny said.

Soon, several other white people joined Jenny. She knew some of them from school. "Okay," said the sheriff. "If you folks want to sit there and not get any food, that's your problem . . . as long as nobody starts any trouble." He tried to sound as if he were in control.

After a while, people started to leave. They went about their business. Nobody wanted to fight with children around. Jenny smiled at the man who had fixed her basket. He smiled back. She felt warm inside, even better than when she got 100% on a test.

As Jenny and her parents walked home, Mr. Davis rolled the bike, holding one handlebar. "The heart and soul of America," he said. "The heart and soul."



“a hop, skip, and a jump away”

“a hop, skip, and a jump away” –  
close by

“a hop, skip, and a jump away” –  
close by

This helped me visualize the  
setting.



“keep my eyes peeled”

“keep my eyes peeled”- watch  
closely

Keep my eyes peeled  
means to watch  
closely

This idiom made me understand more about how Jenny was going to ride home. She was going to watch out for everything so she wouldn't have anymore mishaps.



# Your turn!

Idiom: heart and soul

Definition: \_\_\_\_\_

Impact on me as a reader:

---

---

---

---

---