

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

AUDIENCE STUDY GUIDE

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PERCY, THE 1996 FILM "THE SPITFIRE GRILL"

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

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**THE SPITFIRE GRILL**

**AUTHORS**

**THE SPITFIRE GRILL**

**Music & Book**

**by**

**JAMES VALCQ**

**Lyrics & Book**

**by**

**FRED ALLEY**

**Based on the Film by**

**LEE DAVID ZLOTOFF**

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## PRODUCTION HISTORY

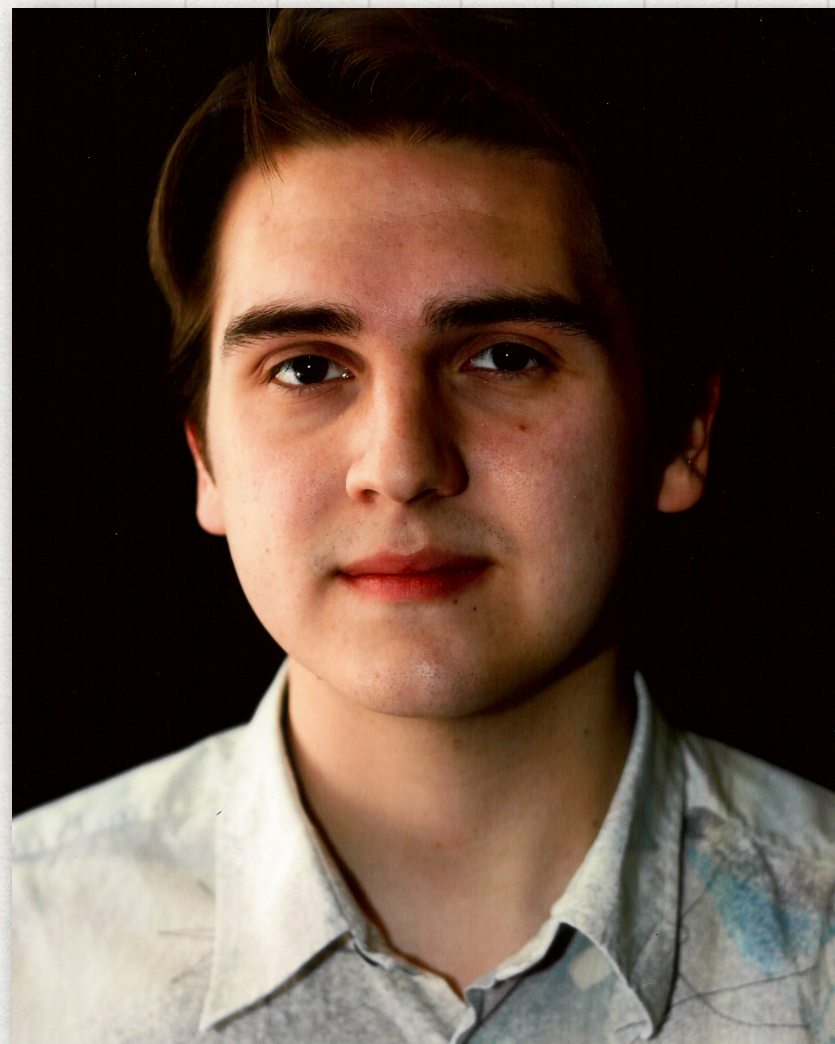
- Premiered in New York Off-Broadway in 2001; the world premiere was on Nov. 5, 2000 at the George Street Playhouse
- 2001 recipient of the Richard Rodgers Production Award by the American Academy of Arts & Letters
- Based on the 1996 film



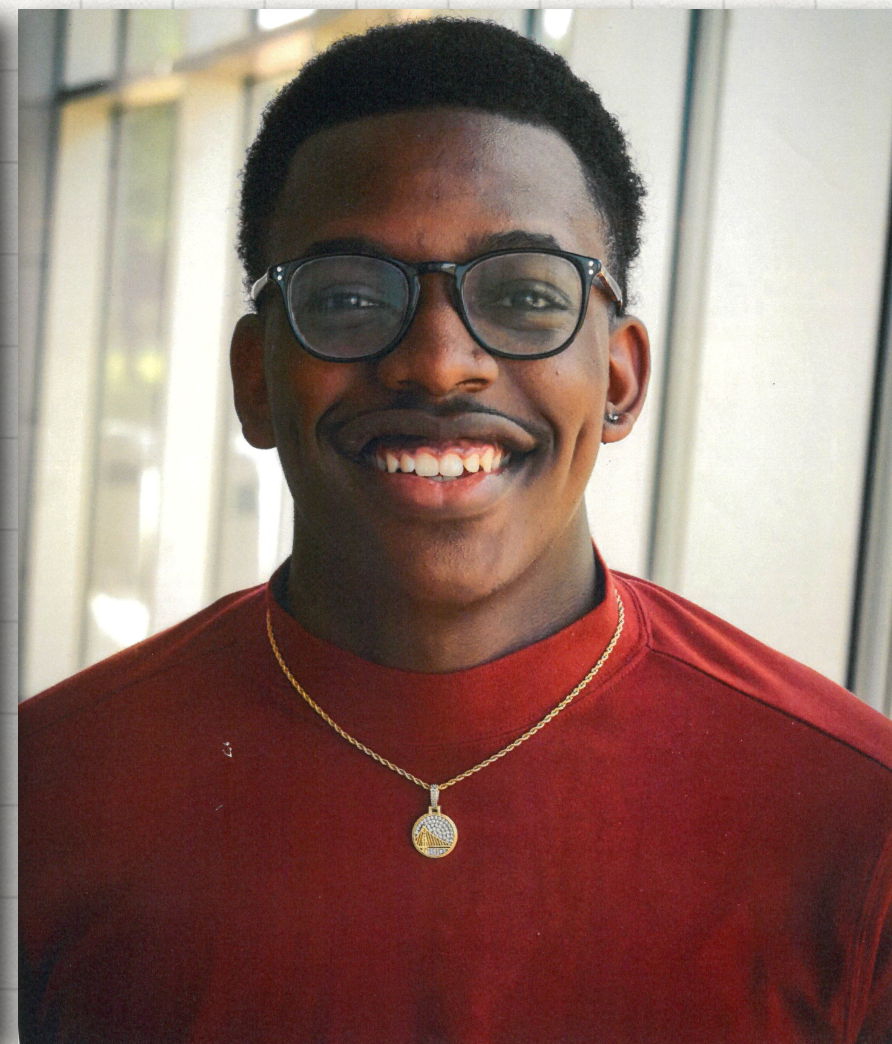
# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## ACU CAST

Morgan Whitley



James Bradshaw



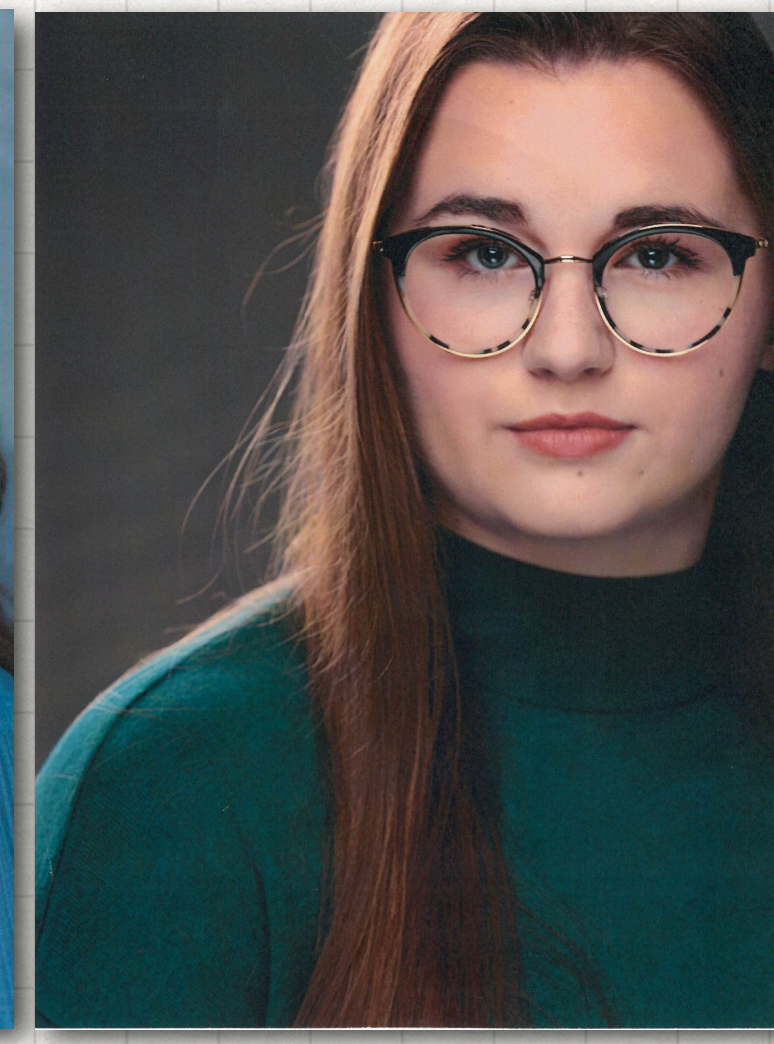
Ryan Po Ko Chu



Zola Feasel



Ella Root



Madi Sipe



Ben Polk



Ty Naicker



Layla Rorem



Macayla Brown



Nouwen Craft



Megan Sloane



# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## SYNOPSIS

After life has dealt them a difficult hand, a tough group of people find home in each other and learn to live again.

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## CHARACTERS





# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## CHARACTERS

- Percy Talbot: 20s pretty, rough-edged; she smokes, has a southern Appalachian accent, born in the West Virginia mountains but is from Detroit. She has never cooked before, and has been in prison for five years
- Hannah Ferguson: 70, gray-haired, wears glasses to read. She is tough-skinned with a short no-nonsense manner bordering on bitter, standard mid-Western accent. She has a secret.
- Shelby Thorpe: mid 30s, plain, shy, almost ethereal manner, standard mid-Western accent
- Caleb Thorpe: early 40s out of work foreman-now-turned-frustrated-working-man, clings to the past, standard mid-Western accent

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## CHARACTERS

- Sheriff Joe Sutter: 20s, small-town policeman; appealing with a relentless nature, standard mid-Western accent
- Effy Krayneck: 50s, postmistress and busybody with a sour tongue, standard mid-Western accent
- The Visitor: mid 40s, mysterious figure who never speaks

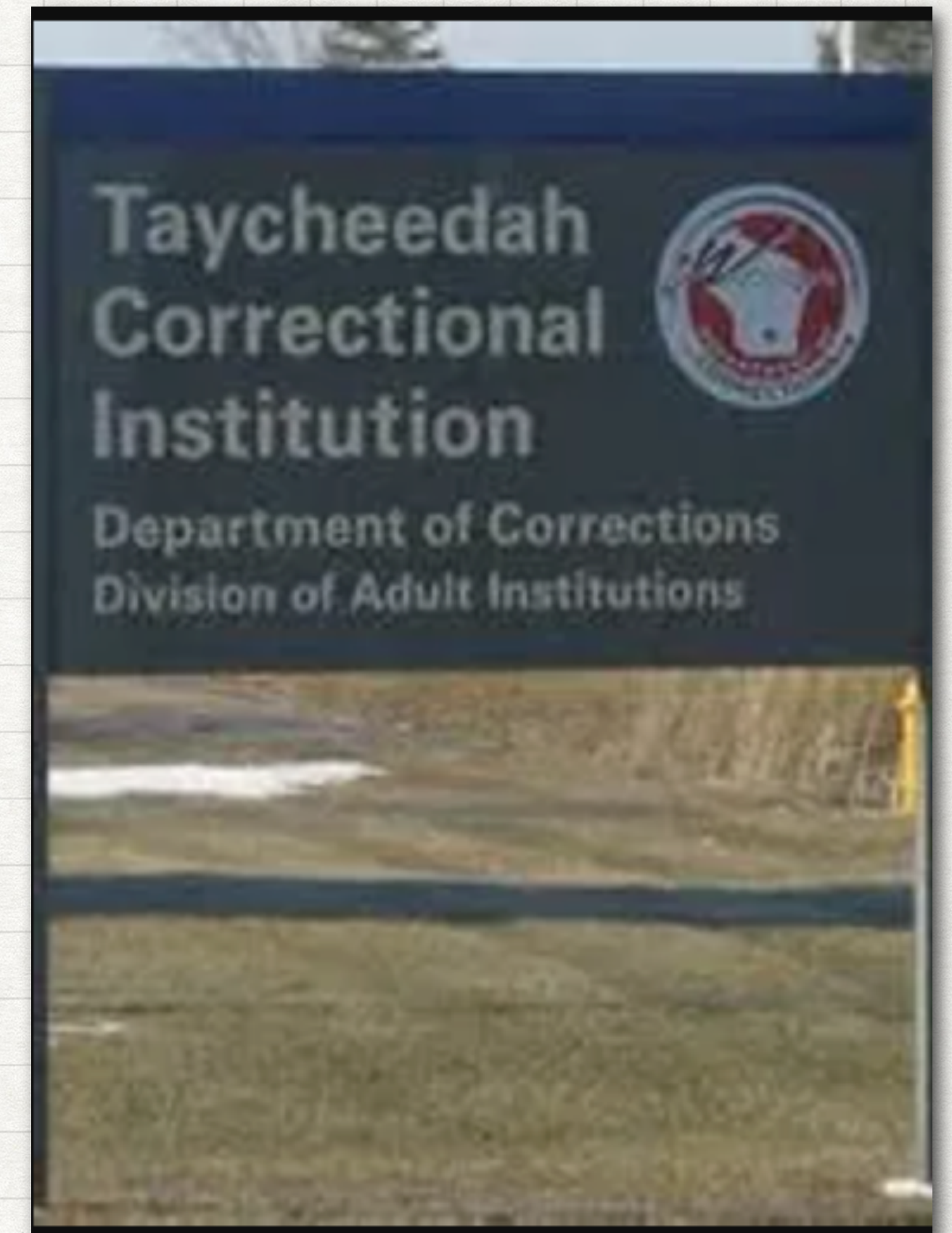
# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## HISTORICAL CONTEXT & SETTING

- The play happens over the course of about a year (from February to October).
- Percy has just been released from Taycheedah Prison and takes a bus to Gilead, Wisconsin near Copper Creek. She arrives after midnight and starts work the next day at the Spitfire Grill, Gilead's only restaurant.
- At the start of the play Gilead is a ghost town, where time stopped after the war ended and the stone quarry shut down. The townspeople are stuck in the past, just like the town. By the end of the play, a revolution of life has happened. The inciting incident starts with the arrival of Percy (a stranger), a raffle contest, a secret revealed, and the return of the town's hero who could never outgrow his father's shadow.

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## TAYCHEEDAH PRISON



# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## COPPER CREEK



THE REAL COPPER CREEK NEAR GILEAD

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## THEMES: DEATH

- Gilead: a ghost town
- Gilead Townspeople: the past is dead
- Taycheedah Prison: buried alive

At the beginning of the play Gilead is stuck in the past. It seems that everything there died after the war; the town, buildings, townspeople, The Spitfire Grill.

Percy is like the "walking dead" when she leaves prison and arrives at Gilead in the "dead" of night. While in prison she finds a brochure of Copper Creek near Gilead and wants to belong there.

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## THEMES: SEASONAL CHANGE

- Trees / Weather: hickories turn gold; the sun turns the maples red as fire; moon with a ring around it, wind, snow, leaves, meadow glows, star-filled sky; Copper Creek frozen vs when it has melted
- Perchance: by some chance, perhaps. Percy's full name is Perchance Talbot.

The play occurs over about 9-10 months. During that time, we experience change in the seasons as the leaves change color, in the weather from day to night and from winter to spring. We see a change in people, in the atmosphere at The Spitfire Grill, and, lastly, in Gilead.

Change may take time, but "there is a time for everything, and a season for every activity under the heavens" (Ecclesiastes 3:3)

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

THEMES: HOME, BEGINNING

- Beginning Again; Fresh Start
- Deep Roots, home, better life

All of the characters in the play have a deep longing for a better life. They all find the courage to start over, but it looks different for each one of them: some find the courage to forgive difficult things, to stay, to let go, or to give, to not live in someone else's shadow, to accept help, and even to enjoy or to be worthy.

*The Spitfire Grill* is a play about finding fulfillment in spite of, and sometimes because of, difficulty. Challenges don't have to be endings; they can become beginnings.



“

YOU THINK IF A WOUND GOES REAL  
DEEP, THAT THE HEALING CAN FEEL  
JUST AS BAD AS WHAT CAUSED IT?

— *Percy Talbot*

”

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## MESSAGE: REBUILD

- There are hard things we ask our audience to walk through in this play.
- Through the hard experiences we watch the characters work to be kinder, reconcile relationships, achieve personal growth and rebuilding community.

An important part of the play are the letters they read at the Spitfire Grill for the raffle. Every letter is pregnant with a story about what the author hopes to do or to find by moving to Gilead and owning the Spitfire Grill.

The Director would like you to consider meditating on the message of rebuild.

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## TREES IN MICHIGAN



UPPER PENINSULA, MICHIGAN

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## TERMS TO KNOW

- Way ho: means "slow down"; it is a greeting.
- Pertneer: a short version of "pretty near".
- Prairie de Chein: second-oldest settlement in Wisconsin; also the oldest community on the Upper Mississippi River.
- Cripes: an expletive; used as a euphemism for Christ.
- Dodgeville: a small community in Portage Township, Michigan.
- Apple Brown Betty: a baked dessert made with fresh apples and topped with a crisp crumble.
- Gangway: means "get out of the way".
- Shoot (for) the Moon: an idiom meaning "to do or get something that is very difficult to do or get".

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## TERMS TO KNOW

- I'll be dipped: means "I'm surprised".
- Holy Moses, Holy Mackerel: expressing surprise or amazement; shocking.
- Applejack Drink: an apple whiskey that was popular during the 1700s.
- Mineral Point: a city in Iowa County, Wisconsin.
- Raffle contests: prizes are awarded to people who pay for a chance to win.
- Stone Quarry: an open-pit mine where stone, rock, and slate are excavated from the ground.
- White trash: poor white people, especially those seen to have little or no value.

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## LAKE IN MICHIGAN



LAKE OF THE CLOUDS, PORCUPINE MOUNTAINS STATE PARK, MICHIGAN

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## DISCLAIMER

THERE MAY BE THOUGHTFUL  
LANGUAGE ADJUSTMENTS AS THE  
DIRECTOR DEEMS NECESSARY.

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## THEATRE ETIQUETTE

LIVE THEATRE IS AN INTIMATE CONVERSATION BETWEEN THE STORY, THE ARTISTS AND THE AUDIENCE.

A FEW AUDIENCE RULES WILL HELP THAT GO WELL:

NO CHATTING

SILENCE YOUR DEVICES

NO PHOTOS / VIDEOS

LAUGH, CRY, CLAP



# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## AN ACTIVITY

Learn how to steam an envelope open like Effy Krayneck, the town busybody!

wikiHow

An illustration showing a pair of hands opening a light blue envelope. The left hand holds the envelope steady, while the right hand uses a silver letter opener to lift the top flap. The background is a solid blue color.

With the glue loosened, carefully lift the envelope flap with a letter opener.

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

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# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

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- <https://dictionary.cambridge.org/us/dictionary/english/shoot-for-the-moon#:~:text=to%20ask%20for%20the%20best,A%20game>
- <https://www.spitfiregrillmusical.com/story>

# THE SPITFIRE GRILL

## THE END

