

Sensory Guide for *Spunk*

Play Summary

Spunk, by Zora Neale Hurston, is a play-with-music in three acts. The play, set in an all-Black community in early 20th-century rural Florida, begins with the arrival of Spunk, a magnetic, guitar-playing man looking for work.

Prologue

Spunk arrives, playing his guitar, at a railroad track in the Florida woods where a group of men is fixing the rail line. Spunk is told about a dangerous but well-paid job at the sawmill.

Act 1

The community gathers for a party. Spunk arrives with a young woman, **Ruby Jones**. The young people start dancing when **Evalina** “Lina” and her husband **Jim Bishop** arrive. Lina wants to join, but Jim tries to stop her. They argue and Jim leaves. Lina meets Spunk. Ruby, seeing Spunk’s interest in Lina, is jealous.

Hodge Bishop (Jim’s father) sees Lina and Spunk together, and leaves, returning with Jim. Jim demands that Lina go home with him.

Act 2

The community gathers to play games. **Nunkie**, a young man, says that Lina and Spunk have been going for walks every day after work. Lina declares that she has chosen Spunk over Jim. Jim follows Lina and Spunk into the woods with a razor. Hodge Bishop says he plans to use hoodoo to curse Spunk. The group hears a gun shot. Spunk and Lina come out of the woods and Spunk admits to shooting Jim after Jim tried to stab him in the back with a knife.

Intermission

More than two months pass and Spunk is in prison. He wonders aloud why Lina didn’t visit him. Spunk receives a letter from Lina; she has written to end their relationship. Spunk leaves to go to Lina, and **Captain Hammer**, who’s overseeing the prisoners, shoots at him, but misses.

When Spunk arrives at Lina’s house, she tells him the community convinced her that her sins were what got Jim killed and that she must break up with Spunk. After accepting Ruby’s invitation to have a meal with her, Spunk goes back to Lina’s house, swearing to Lina that he loves her.

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Act 3

Days later, at a gathering, **Mrs. Watson** reminisces about the night before, when Spunk and Lina were officially married. Lina tells Mrs. Watson that she's seen Dr. Buzzard, a hoodoo practitioner, about protecting Spunk from Hodge Bishop.

The next scene features Hodge Bishop and six other men, all dressed in cat robes, performing a hoodoo ritual meant to kill Spunk.

Waiting at home for Spunk to return from work, Lina tells Mrs. Watson that she heard cats all around their house the night before. Lina and Ruby hear the sound of mourners singing. Lina thinks that Spunk has died, and she begins to pick flowers for his grave. The funeral procession approaches, and she sees that it's Hodge Bishop, not Spunk, who has died. Spunk and Lina enter their home, singing, and Ruby listens and sings too, before the rest of the town joins in.

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Things to be aware of:

- There is a moment when an actor walks **through the auditorium**. If you need to leave the theater for a break or to use the restroom, please use caution. An usher will be at the exit to help you safely leave the theater.
- There will be **Break areas** throughout our building. There will be signs to help you find them.
- There are moments of **loud thumping** on the stage with sticks.
- There are **loud banging sounds** from steel hammers hitting the floor.
- **Gunshot sound** followed by a **scream** (both from offstage).
- Characters wearing **striped jail uniforms** and wearing chains around their ankles.
- Three (3) **gunshot sounds** from a rifle onstage.
- Characters wearing **skeleton masks** and **dark robes** and **drumming**.
- A projection of a **demon cat** followed by a very bright light shining into the audience.
- A **funeral march** with a covered body on a stretcher.

