Persephone, Falling
by Rita Dove

One narcissus among the ordinary beautiful
flowers, one unlike all the others! She pulled,
stood to pull harder—
when, sprung out of the earth
on his glittering terrible
carriage, he claimed his due.
It is finished. No one heard her.
No one! She had strayed from the herd.

(Remember: go straight to school.
This is important, stop fooling around!
Don’t answer to strangers. Stick
with your playmates. Keep your eyes down.)
This is how easily the pit
opens. This is how one foot sinks into the ground

Step 1 - Each group member should read the poem out loud once to the rest of the group. Make annotations in the margins as you read /listen to the poem. Include observations and questions that your have in your notations.

Step 2- Answer the questions that follow:
Questions on "Persephone, Falling"

1. Discuss the structure of the poem. What is the purpose of the first stanza? How does it relate to the second stanza?

2. Describe the voice you hear in the second stanza. Who could be saying these words? To whom? Why?

3. What stages of the hero journey archetype correspond with "Persephone, Falling"? Explain, referencing specific lines from the poem in your response.

4. Why is the poem titled "Persephone, Falling"? How does the allusion to Demeter and Persephone enrich our understanding of the poem?
**The Search**  
By Rita Dove

Blown apart by loss, she let herself go—  
walked the neighborhood hatless, breasts  
swinging under a ratty sweater, crusted  
mascara blackening her gaze. It was a shame,  
the wives whispered, to carry on so.  
To them, wearing foam curlers arraigned  
like piglets to market was almost debonair,  
but an uncombed head?—not to be trusted.

The men watched more closely, tantalized  
by so much indifference. Winter came early and still  
she frequented the path by the river until  
one with murmurous eyes pulled her down to size.  
Sniffed Mrs. Franklin, ruling matron, to the rest:  
Serves her right, the old mare.

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Step 1 - Each group member should read the poem out loud once to the rest of the group. Make annotations in the margins as you read / listen to the poem. Include observations and questions that your have in your notations.

Step 2 - Answer the questions that follow:
Questions 1-7 on "The Search"

1. Who is being described in the first stanza? What can you infer about "the loss" this person incurred? How has the loss affected this person?

2. What can you infer about the setting of the poem? Reference specific lines in your response.

3. Comment on the whispering wives in the first stanza. How does this help us understand the challenges faced by the woman being described in the poem?

4. Explain the following line: "The men watched more closely, tantalized /by so much indifference."

5. Explain Mrs. Franklin's comments in the final lines of the poem.

6. What stages of the hero journey archetype correspond with "The Search"? Explain, referencing specific lines from the poem in your response.
7. Why is the poem titled “The Search”? How does the allusion to Demeter and Persephone enrich our understanding of the poem?

Final Question:
Imagine another poem titled “The Pomegranate” that continues the story Rita Dove tells in “Persephone, Falling” and “The Search.”

1. What might the poem be about?

2. How would the pomegranate allusion support the poem’s content and theme?

One group member should email me a copy of the group’s work. Include all member’s names at the top!