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| **Persephone, Falling**  Rita Dove  One narcissus among the ordinary beautiful flowers, one unlike all the others! She pulled, stooped 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. | **Terms to know:**  **allusion:** a reference made to another work of art of literature or a historical or current event.  **pronoun:** a word that replaces a noun  **stanza:** a “paragraph” of poetry |

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| **Persephone, Falling**  Rita Dove | Questions |
| 1 One narcissus among the ordinary beautiful 2 flowers, one unlike all the others! She pulled, 3 stooped to pull harder— 4 when, sprung out of the earth 5 on his glittering terrible 6 carriage, he claimed his due. 7 It is finished. No one heard her. 8 No one! She had strayed from the herd.    9 (Remember: go straight to school. 10 This is important, stop fooling around! 11 Don’t answer to strangers. Stick 12 with your playmates. Keep your eyes down.) 13 This is how easily the pit 14 opens. This is how one foot sinks into the ground. | How does the title help you to understand the poem?  Notice that the poet didn’t use any names in the first stanza. Who are the “she” and “he” in the poem? How do you know? Why do you think the poet chose not to use names?  Why did she stop to pull up a narcissus?  What might it mean to “claim his due”?  What is “it” referring to in line 7? Why is it finished?  How many sentences are in the first six lines? How many sentences are there in lines 7 and 8? Why do you think the poet switched the sentence length?  What advice is the poet giving in lines 9-12?  Who is the poet addressing in lines 9-12?  Why might lines 9-12 be in parentheses?  Why did the poet divide this poem into two stanzas? What did the first stanza focus on? What does the second stanza focus on?  How did a pit literally open and a foot literally sink into the ground in this poem? What else might it mean for a pit to open and a foot to sink into the ground?  What is “this” referring to in lines 13 and 14? How does the pit open easily? How does one foot sink into the ground according to the poem? |

**Focus question:** What message is the poet using the story of Persephone to communicate?

**Persephone, Falling**

Rita Dove

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flowers, one unlike all the others! She pulled,  
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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.

Message: It is easy to get into trouble if you don’t follow the rules and stay on track.

1. Persephone got into trouble because “strayed from the herd” to go pick a narcissus. Because she hadn’t stayed where she was supposed to, when Hades came and “claimed” her “No one heard her” and, so no one was able to help her.
2. Parentheses: Author’s advice to be where you’re supposed to—“go straight to school” and “don’t talk to strangers.”
3. Last two lines: The author is warning that if you don’t stick to the path your will wind up like Persephone. She sank into the ground and fell into the pit of Hades. If you don’t follow the rules, you’ll sink into a pit of trouble.