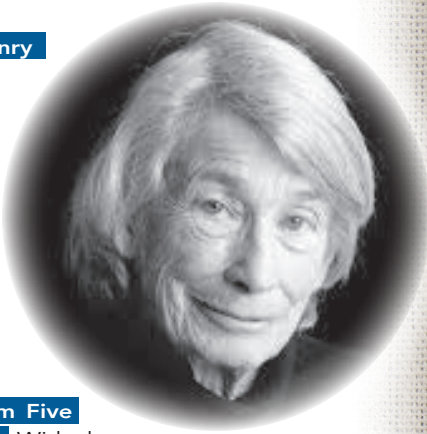


**Growing Old & Facing the Sunset of Our Lives.** With love and friendship, we now have come full circle, exploring how to cope with the end of life, by discussing a wide range of literature that offers lessons about death, such as Marilynne Robinson's *Gilead*, Donna Tartt's *The Goldfinch*, *King Lear*, and many others.

**The Urgent Relevance of Henry David Thoreau's Prophetic Voice.**

With the challenges of climate change increasingly becoming our most pressing existential crisis, Thoreau, one of our very first environmentalists, warned us over 150 years ago. We ignore him at our own peril--so he deserves to be listened to carefully.



**Odes to Earth: Lessons from Five of Our Best Nature Writers.**

With the heritage of Thoreau obviously present, this Talk explores representative works by Annie Dillard, Rick Bass, Terry Tempest Williams, Barry Lopez, and Bill McKibben, all writers who sound loudly and effectively the environmental alarm bell.

**Wandering Through the Landscape of Impressionism in Art and Literature.**

Literature about this remarkable period of art is extensive, and this Talk will explore books about some of the greatest Impressionist painters, such as Susan Vreeland's historical novel, *Luncheon of the Boating Party*, Kathryn Wagner's *Dancing for Degas*. Ross King's excellent study of the Canadian Group of Seven artists, *Defiant Spirits*, and several others. If you love Impressionism art, this Talk will expand your love.

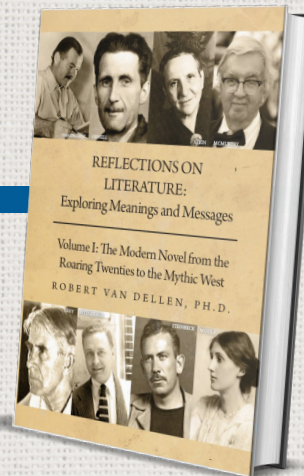


**NOTE:** The intent is to publish Volume III under the title of *Life's Lessons from Literature* as the final book in the *Reflections on Literature: Exploring Meanings and Messages* series. Those Talks cited under "*Life's Lessons from Literature*" will be formatted as essays to complete the three-volume series.

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# Bob Talks: REFLECTIONS ON LITERATURE

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These Talks are worthwhile for museums,  
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Fees for the presentations are negotiable.

# Topics Ready to Present

## NOVELS & NOVELISTS:

**Searching for the Lost Generation: Literature During the Roaring Twenties** (Published in Volume I). Explore the major writers and novels of the 1920s, such as F. Scott Fitzgerald, Hemingway, Gertrude Stein, and many others, as well as the social context for this remarkably creative period.

**Hemingway's Key West and Cuba: *The Old Man and the Sea*** (Published in Volume I). The focus is an analysis of this iconic novel and also a look at Hemingway's tumultuous life.

**A Literary Giant: The Life and Works of John Steinbeck** (Published in Volume I). With a focus on *The Grapes of Wrath* and *East of Eden*, there is also an overview of the author's life.

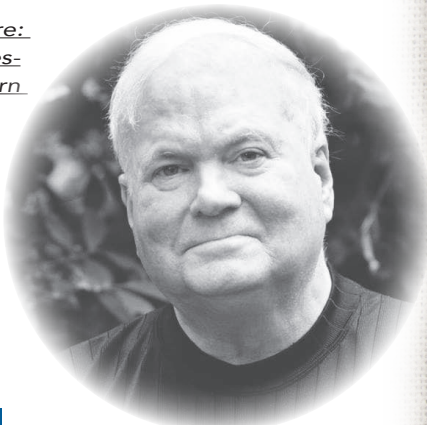
**The American West and Its Writers:** (Published in Volume I). This Talk covers a wide range of classic American Western writers, such as Zane Grey, C.J. Box, Larry McMurtry and many others as well as explorations into mythic misconceptions about the West, especially concerning Native Americans and their brutal treatment.

**The Prophetic Vision of George Orwell and His Politics of Power: *Animal Farm* and *1984* Revisited** (Published in Volume I). With a close look at Orwell's two classic works, this Talk also explores his on-going relevance in the context of power politics and authoritarianism.

**See: *Reflections on Literature: Exploring Meanings and Messages; Volume I: The Modern Novel from the Roaring Twenties to the Mythic West***, written by Robert Van Dellen and published by Dorrance Publishing Co.; 2023. The above Talks are essays in this book.

**A Evening with Pat Conroy: From the Pain of Suffering to the Glory of Forgiveness.**

One of our very best contemporary American writers, this Talk discusses Conroy's personal struggles and the power of his voice. This Talk will be included in Volume III as an essay in the *Reflections on Literature* series.



**High Tea with Chief Inspector Gamache and the Characters of Three Pines: The Novels of Louise Penny.** The adventurers of Inspector Gamache invite us to solve murders in the context of remarkable characters in the works of Louise Penny, one of our very best murder-mystery writers. This Talk will also appear as an essay in Volume III of the *Reflections on Literature* series.

**Six Great British Novels: Why They Matter & Why You Should Read or Re-read Them.** This Talk looks at Fielding's *The History of Tom Jones*, Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, *Great Expectations* by Dickens, *To The Lighthouse* by Virginia Woolf, *The Good Soldier* by Ford Madox Ford, and *Lucky Jim* by Kingsley Amis. This Talk will also be incorporated into Volume III in the *Reflections on Literature* series.



## POETRY & POETS:

**The Amazing Voices of Maya Angelou and Her Legacy.** A look at both the life and the works of this great contemporary poet is the focus of this Talk.

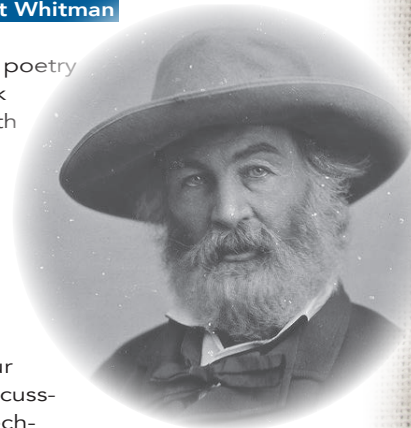
**Making Connections: The Visionary Poetry of Mary Oliver.** Truly, one of our most respected poets, this Talk explains why.

**William Blake's Creative Genius: Painter, Poet, Prophet.** Not only a great poet, Blake was also an incredible painter, and his poetry and art are forces in his prophetic genius, a genius that is a foundation for modern poetry.

**Two Great American Voices: Walt Whitman & Robert Frost.** Whitman's legacy in American poetry is deep and wide, and this Talk discusses that legacy along with the important works of Robert Frost.

**Poetic Gems: Great Poems & Their Meanings --- Shakespeare, Wordsworth, T. S. Eliot, & Others.**

This Talk explores a diverse range of poems by some of our very best poets, and it also discusses some of the fundamental techniques of poetry.



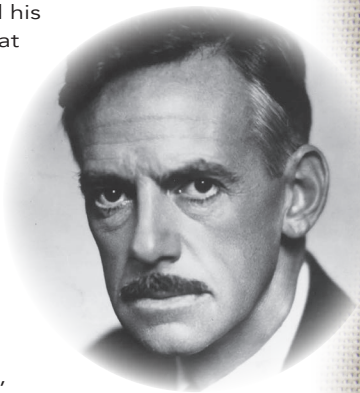
## DRAMA & DRAMATISTS:

**Two Great American Playwrights: Eugene O'Neill & Tennessee Williams.** A look at the lives of these incredible dramatists and some of their best plays is the focus of this Talk.

**The Tragic Vision of Arthur Miller.** This valued playwright helped define modern tragedy and his works represent the very best of that drama.

**Shakespeare's Wondrous World: His Tragic & Comic Vision.** This Talk examines two of his best plays as illustrations of both his comic and tragic view of reality.

**NOTE:** With Volume I published and available in the *Reflections on Literature: Exploring Meanings and Messages* series, Volume II is titled: *The Drama of Words: Touching Our Souls Through Poetry and Drama*. This Volume will be in two parts. Part One is "The Significance of Poetry" and it will include those Talks cited above under the Poetry Section. Part Two is "The World as Stage---Theater" and it will include those Talks cited above under the Drama Section. It is anticipated that Volume II will be published before the end of 2023.



## LIFE'S LESSONS FROM LITERATURE:

**Who Doesn't Love a Good Love Story.** This Talk looks at a diverse range of works that focus on the importance of love; what can we learn about love from such works as *Apples Never Fall* by Liane Moriarty; Shakespeare's famous Sonnet 116 ("Let me not to the marriage of true minds"): *Romeo and Juliet*; Toni Morrison's *Beloved*; Miranda Cowley Heller's *The Paper Palace*; and the touching poem "Mother to Son" by Langston Hughes.

**Friendships in Literature: The Blessings & the Curses.** Love and friendship are close cousins and literature has a lot to teach us about the need for and importance of friendship, exploring such works as *Crossing to Safety* by Wallace Stegner, the classic *Don Quixote*, Mary McCarthy's *The Group*, *Moby Dick*, *Last Bus to Wisdom* by Ivan Doig, James Dickey's disturbing *Deliverance*, the famous *Huck Finn*, and others.