

Rita Frances Dove
Doctor of Letters

Rita Dove is among the most appreciated and honored of America's poets. Her works include several collections of poetry, two books of short stories, one novel, a collection of essays, and a verse drama. *Thomas and Beulah*, a collection of poems inspired by the lives of her grandparents, won the Pulitzer Prize for Poetry in 1987. From 1993 to 1995 she held the post of Poet Laureate of the United States. She is currently working on a song cycle for soprano Kathleen Battle. The poems will be set to music by composer John Williams and are scheduled to be performed in October with the National Symphony Orchestra at the Kennedy Center. The New York Philharmonic is planning additional performances for January 1998 at Lincoln Center.

Among her many honors, Rita Dove counts the Folger Shakespeare Library's Renaissance Forum Award for Leadership in the Literary Arts, a Gold Plate Award from the American Academy of Achievement, the Carl Sandburg Award from the International Platform Association, the National Book Award in Poetry (1991), and honorary degrees from some 12 institutions of higher learning. President Clinton chose her for a 1996 Charles Frankel Prize in the humanities, less than a month after she had received a 1996 Heinz Award. These are but a few examples of the many awards and distinctions that Rita Dove has achieved since her first award ceremony at the White House, when she was named a 1970 Presidential Scholar after having been identified as one of the top 100 high school graduates in that year.

Rita Dove received her bachelor's degree in English from Miami University in Ohio, graduating summa cum laude and Phi Beta Kappa. She has done post-graduate work at the Universität Tübingen (Germany) and the University of Iowa. She has earned fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts (1978, 1989), the Guggenheim Foundation (1983-84), and the National Humanities Center (1988-89). Rita Dove teaches creative writing at the University of Virginia, where she is Commonwealth Professor of English. She is the youngest person, second woman, and first African-American to have been chosen Poet Laureate and is one of only two African-American women to have won the Pulitzer Prize.