Mr. Chancellor, it is my privilege to present Audrey Thomas, a distinguished author who has courageously walked the often difficult and lonely road of the creative artist. Through her significant body of work she has made an important and lasting contribution to our literature. It is for this gift that we honour her today.

Born in Binghamton, New York, she has spent time in England and Ghana and has travelled extensively in the former French West African colonies. Since 1959, and to our great good fortune, Audrey Thomas has made her home in British Columbia, where she has established herself as one of Canada’s most original writers, her work consistently rewarding and thought-provoking.

She published her first collection of short stories, Ten Green Bottles, in 1967 and her first novel, Mrs. Blood, in 1970. Both were praised by critics and public alike. Her stature has grown with each successive book. Works such as Songs My Mother Taught Me, Blown Figures, Intertidal Life, and most recently, Graven Images, continue to attract the kind of reader who takes pleasure in being challenged by both style and insight.

An astute observer of the human condition, Audrey Thomas has said that she writes primarily about modern women with their particular dreams, delights, ‘despairs, and how these women relate to men and the terrible things they do to one another in the name of love. And indeed, in her short stories, novellas, and novels, she explores the subtleties and nuances of human relationships with a probing intelligence, exposing—in the words of Jane Rule—"...her characters in light like the intense glare of the sun against the white walls of the houses."

A committed and proud member of the community of writers, Audrey Thomas believes in the importance of mentorship. She has served as Writer-in-Residence at several universities including the University of British Columbia, the University of Victoria, and Simon Fraser University, and has guided many aspiring writers at each one.

Throughout her career, Audrey Thomas has received several prestigious awards including The Marian Engel Award, the Canada-Australia Literary Prize, the B.C. Book Prize, and the Ethel Wilson Fiction Prize, which she won in 1985 and again in 1991.

Mr. Chancellor, in the name of the Senate of Simon Fraser University, I present to you Audrey Thomas for the degree of Doctor of Laws, honoris causa.