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## **A Proximity of Words: Influence and Interplay in the Works of Raymond Carver and Tess Gallagher**

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Oral Presentation 4.1

**A PROXIMITY OF WORDS: INFLUENCE AND INTERPLAY IN THE WORKS OF  
RAYMOND CARVER AND TESS GALLAGHER**

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In the literary world we find countless examples of people drawn together by the common thread of a love for words. In many cases, these friendships blossomed into more intimate relationships. While studies have been done about such literary couples, Raymond Carver and Tess Gallagher, one of the greatest and perhaps most inspirational literary couple, has been virtually ignored. Although their relationship was cut short by Carver's death in 1988, it nonetheless resulted in some of Carver and Gallagher's most celebrated writing. In countless interviews and essays, each recognized the other as one who understood the other's vision, and respected the other's respective writing space. Each has admitted to the role the other played in his/her life, recognizing the other as his/her own best critic, but Carver also acknowledged Gallagher as a source of stability when his life was complicated by divorce and the after effects of alcoholism. In fact, it was under Gallagher's influence that Carver began writing after a two-year lapse due to the volatility of his personal life. Most telling of writing's centrality to their relationship, however, is what comes across in the writing itself. Shortly after they met, each began experimenting in the other's genre. Carver began experimenting more and more with poetry, while Gallagher began writing fiction for the first time. While this obvious "swapping" of genres demonstrates one influence each had on the other, an examination of Carver's and Gallagher's respective fiction most clearly illustrates how they drew upon one another's strengths and adapted them in their works.