

# Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe was a famous American artist, best known for her paintings of flowers, skyscrapers and the landscape of New Mexico.

## Early Life

Georgia was born on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1887 on a wheat farm in Wisconsin, USA. She was the second of seven children so she was rarely lonely growing up. Although there were many chores to do on the farm, she always had a sketchbook in her hand. She was fascinated by nature and decided by the age of ten that she wanted to be an artist. Her mum and dad were both farmers but her mum, Ida, had dreamed of being a doctor and wanted her children to be well educated. Ida encouraged Georgia's love of art and arranged for her to have art lessons.



When she was old enough, Georgia went to art school in Chicago and then to New York to study painting. After this, she moved to Texas to teach art but she kept drawing. It was difficult being a woman artist at this time as most famous artists were men and some people didn't take women artists seriously. She sent some of her drawings to a friend, who showed them to a famous photographer, Alfred Stieglitz; he **exhibited** Georgia's work in his gallery in 1916.

## A Brand-New Style

Georgia began painting in a new and innovative way. Instead of painting a vase of flowers from far away (as American painters before her had always done), she put her face close to one flower and painted what she saw, **magnified**. She used oil paints in bold, vivid colours and she painted on a huge scale. When people looked at her paintings, they couldn't always work out what they were looking at. She was one of the first American artists to paint in this **abstract** style. Her paintings became very popular and she became successful.



Georgia was inspired by the tall buildings of New York City where she lived. She painted the towering skyscrapers from below – as a child would see them. In 1929, Georgia visited New Mexico and was amazed by the wide, open landscape that reminded her of her childhood. She was fascinated by the unusual light, rocks and animal bones. She began painting landscapes and natural objects in New Mexico and these paintings added to her success.



## Artistic Legacy

Georgia painted thousands of paintings in her lifetime and her work has been exhibited at galleries all over the world. Her **legacy** is that she is one of the greatest American artists of the twentieth century and has been called the 'Mother of American **Modernism**'. The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum opened in Santa Fe in 1997 and you can see many of her paintings on display there.



## Glossary

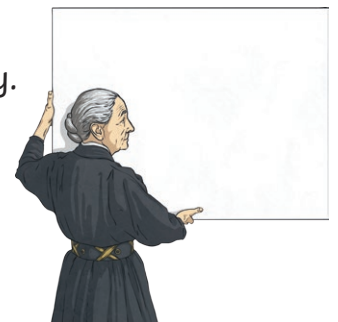
**abstract:** A style of art that uses shape, lines and colour in a way that does not show things as they are.

**exhibited:** To show something publicly, such as paintings in a gallery.

**legacy:** How someone is remembered.

**magnified:** To make something appear larger than it is.

**Modernism:** Art that moves away from traditional styles.



# Questions

1. What was Georgia **not** famous for painting? Tick **one**.

- skyscrapers
- portraits
- flowers
- landscapes

2. Number the places 1-5 below to show the order that Georgia lived there or visited.

- New York
- Wisconsin
- New Mexico
- Texas
- Chicago

3. Find and copy the phrase that tells you that Georgia's love of nature was connected to her childhood.

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4. Fill in the missing words.

Alfred Stieglitz \_\_\_\_\_ Georgia's work in his \_\_\_\_\_ in 1916.

5. What style did Georgia paint in?

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6. Why do you think Georgia's mother encouraged her to become an artist?

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7. Explain why you think Georgia's paintings became popular and successful. Give two reasons.

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8. ***It was difficult being a woman artist at this time as most famous artists at this time were men and some people didn't take women artists seriously.***

If this was true, why do you think a famous photographer took Georgia seriously and exhibited her work in his gallery in 1916? Give two possible reasons.

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