

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 15th 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

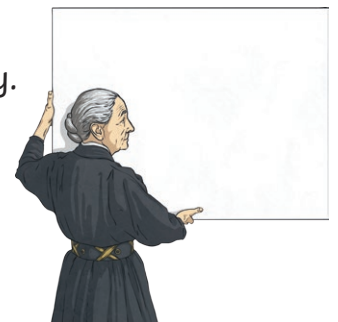
abstract: A style of art that uses shape, lines and colour in a way that does not show things as they are.

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.

4. Fill in the missing words.

Alfred Stieglitz _____ Georgia's work in his _____ in 1916.

5. What style did Georgia paint in?

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

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

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.

Answers

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.
that reminded her of her childhood
4. Fill in the missing words.
Alfred Stieglitz **exhibited** Georgia's work in his **gallery** in 1916.
5. What style did Georgia paint in?
abstract
6. Why do you think Georgia's mother encouraged her to become an artist?
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Georgia's mother encouraged her to become an artist because she had dreamed of becoming a doctor but hadn't been able to so she wanted her daughter to achieve her dreams.
7. Explain why you think Georgia's paintings became popular and successful. Give two reasons.
Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Georgia's paintings became popular and successful because they were different to what other artists had always done before and people were bored of the same style. Also because people couldn't work out what they were looking at and found this interesting.

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.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think a famous photographer might have exhibited Georgia's work in his gallery in 1916 because he thought her work was really new and different to anything else being made at that time. It also might have been because it was shown to him by a friend.

Georgia O'Keeffe

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

Early Life

For an artist whose style would go on to be recognised around the world, Georgia came from humble beginnings. She was born on 15th November 1887 on a wheat farm in Wisconsin, USA. The second of seven children, she was rarely lonely growing up. Although there were many chores to do on the farm, she was never without a sketchbook in her hand.



The natural world of the farm interested her and by the age of ten, she had decided that she wanted to be an artist. She was deeply influenced by the landscape of Wisconsin, which became evident in her later work. Her mother, Ida, encouraged Georgia's love of art and arranged for her to have art lessons.

Georgia left her modest home to go 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 wasn't easy being a woman artist at this time; most famous artists were men and some people didn't think women could be serious artists. Georgia sent some of her charcoal line drawings to a friend, who showed them to a famous photographer, Alfred Stieglitz; he **exhibited** Georgia's work in his gallery in 1916. Alfred and Georgia later married.

A Brand-New Style

Georgia was disappointed that people in big cities like New York were too busy to pay attention to small beautiful things like flowers. She decided to make them pay attention. She said, "I'll paint what I see – what the flower is to me but I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it." This was just what she did. She put her face close to a flower and painted what she saw. Suddenly, the smallest flower became an enormous painting! She used oil paints in vivid, bold colours and she painted on huge canvases. This new and unusual style made even busy New Yorkers stop and take notice.



Georgia was also **inspired** by the busy city of New York, where she lived. She painted the towering skyscrapers from below as if she was a tiny child looking up at them. These paintings also made people look at the modern city in a new way.

In 1929, Georgia visited New Mexico and was amazed at the landscape; the incredible rock formations, the unusual light, the bones of animals dried out by the sun and the **Navajo** culture. She began painting landscapes and natural objects in New Mexico and these paintings added to her success.



Artistic Legacy

In her astonishing lifetime, Georgia painted thousands of paintings that have now been exhibited in 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**'.

In 2014, one of Georgia's artworks set a new auction record for a painting by a female artist. The painting sold for 44.4 million dollars (28.8 million pounds)! The painting can now be seen, alongside many of her others, at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe. The museum was opened in 1997 so that her genius would never be forgotten.

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 the ideas and methods of traditional styles.

Navajo culture: The art, music and clothing of the Native American people of the Southwestern United States.



Questions

1. Where was Georgia born? Tick **one**.

- New York
- Wisconsin
- New Mexico
- Texas

2. Number the events below to show the order that they happened to Georgia.

- Her charcoal drawings were exhibited in a gallery.
- She painted things looking up.
- Her mother encouraged her love of art.
- She painted things up close.
- She was disappointed in the people of New York.

3. Find and copy one word that describes Georgia's background.

4. Fill in the missing words.

Georgia was inspired by the places _____ and _____.

5. Who did Georgia marry?

6. What was Georgia's main goal in painting her flower paintings? How did she achieve it?

7. ***She was deeply influenced by the landscape of Wisconsin, which became evident in her later work.***

How do you think Georgia's love of the landscape as a child can be seen in her later work?

8. What are the main similarities between Georgia's flower paintings and her paintings of skyscrapers?

9. ***It wasn't easy being a woman artist at this time; most famous artists were men and some people didn't think women could be serious artists.***

Give evidence from the text that proves these people were wrong not to take Georgia seriously.

Answers

1. Where was Georgia born? Tick **one**.

- New York
- Wisconsin**
- New Mexico
- Texas

2. Number the events below to show the order that they happened to Georgia.

- 2** Her charcoal drawings were exhibited in a gallery.
- 5** She painted things looking up.
- 1** Her mother encouraged her love of art.
- 4** She painted things up close.
- 3** She was disappointed in the people of New York.

3. Find and copy one word that describes Georgia's background.

humble or modest

4. Fill in the missing words.

Georgia was inspired by the places **New York** and **New Mexico**.

5. Who did Georgia marry?

Georgia married Alfred Stieglitz.

6. What was Georgia's main goal in painting her flower paintings? How did she achieve it?

Georgia's main goal in painting her flower paintings was to make people pay attention to small beautiful things like flowers. She achieved it by painting the flowers larger than life.

7. ***She was deeply influenced by the landscape of Wisconsin, which became evident in her later work.***

How do you think Georgia's love of the landscape as a child can be seen in her later work?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Georgia's love of the landscape as a child affected her later work because she chose to paint landscapes and nature later in her life.

8. What are the main similarities between Georgia's flower paintings and her paintings of skyscrapers?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the main similarity between Georgia's flower and building paintings is that they both make the viewer look at the subject in a new way and make them feel small.

9. *It wasn't easy being a woman artist at this time; most famous artists were men and some people didn't think women could be serious artists.*

Give evidence from the text that proves these people were wrong not to take Georgia seriously.

Pupils' own responses, such as: People were wrong not to take Georgia seriously because she turned out to be one of the greatest American artists of the twentieth century and in 2014 one of Georgia's paintings sold for 44.4 million dollars (28.8 million pounds).

Georgia O'Keeffe

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

Early Life

For an artist whose style would go on to be internationally recognisable, Georgia came from humble beginnings; she was born on 15th November 1887 on a wheat farm in Wisconsin, USA and as the second of seven children she was rarely lonely growing up. Although there were many chores to do on the farm, she was never without a sketchbook in her hand because the natural world of the farm fascinated her (she was deeply affected by the landscape of Wisconsin, which became evident in her later work). By the age of ten, she had decided that she wanted to be an artist in order to express the beauty she saw around her and her mother, Ida, encouraged Georgia's love of art by arranging for her to have art lessons.



Georgia left her modest home to go to art school in Chicago, followed by New York, where she studied painting. Finally, she moved to Texas to teach art but she continued drawing. It wasn't easy being a woman artist at this time; most famous artists were men and it was difficult to convince people to take female artists seriously. She sent some of her charcoal line drawings to a friend, who showed them to a famous photographer, Alfred Stieglitz. Alfred recognised Georgia's potential and saw that her drawings were very different to any other art being made in America at the time. So, he took a risk and **exhibited** them in his gallery in 1916; Alfred and Georgia later married.

A New Way of Seeing

Georgia noticed that in New York people were always in such a rush that they rarely stopped to appreciate the beauty of small things, like a flower. She said to herself, "If I could paint the flower exactly as I see it, no one would see what I see because I would paint it small like the flower is small." Instead she decided, "I'll paint what I see – what the flower is to me but I'll paint it big and they will be surprised into taking time to look at it – I will make even busy New Yorkers take time to see what I see of flowers."



This is just what Georgia did – she painted tiny, delicate flowers on a huge, magnified scale. Her use of bold, vivid oil paints and gigantic canvases shocked people into paying attention and seeing the world as Georgia saw it. Although viewers often couldn't work out what they were looking at, this only added to the appeal of her paintings. She was one of the first American artists to paint in this intriguing, **abstract** style – a style of art that uses shape, lines and colour in a way that does not show things as they are. Her paintings became very popular and she became successful.

It wasn't only the wonders of the natural world that interested Georgia. She was also inspired by the tall skyscrapers of New York City; these buildings filled her with awe and made her feel small and insignificant, in the same way that nature did. She painted the towering skyscrapers from below – as a child would see them. Again, people were impressed to see such ordinary things presented in such an innovative way.



In 1929, Georgia visited New Mexico and the wide, open landscape transported her straight back to her childhood. She was overwhelmed by the incredible rock formations, the unusual light, the bones of animals dried out by the sun and the Navajo culture, which is the art, music and clothing of the Native American people of the Southwestern United States. The paintings she produced in New Mexico added to her success.

Artistic Legacy

In her astonishing lifetime, Georgia painted thousands of paintings that have now been exhibited in galleries worldwide. Her legacy is that she is remembered as one of the greatest American artists of the twentieth century and has been called the 'Mother of American Modernism' (art that departs from more traditional styles).

In 2014, one of Georgia's artworks set a new auction record for a painting by a female artist, when it sold for 44.4 million dollars, or 28.8 million pounds! The painting can now be seen, alongside many of her others, at the Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe.

Questions

1. Which words describe Georgia's beginnings? Tick **two**.

- unhappy
- humble
- lonely
- modest

2. Draw lines to match up these sentences about Georgia's subjects.

Flowers

New Mexico

New York

Made people look at the city in a new way.

Painted landscapes and natural objects.

Painted up close to make people pay attention.

3. Find and copy two words that describe how the buildings of New York City made Georgia feel.

4. Fill in the missing words.

Georgia painted flowers with _____ on huge _____.

5. What record did Georgia's artwork set in 2014?

6. Why do you think the second section of the text is called ***A New Way of Seeing?***

7. What are the main similarities and differences between Georgia's three main painting subjects?

8. Explain why you think Georgia has been called ***The Mother of American Modernism***.

9. ***So, he took a risk and exhibited them in his gallery in 1916...***

Explain why you think exhibiting Georgia's drawings meant Alfred was taking a risk. Give two reasons.

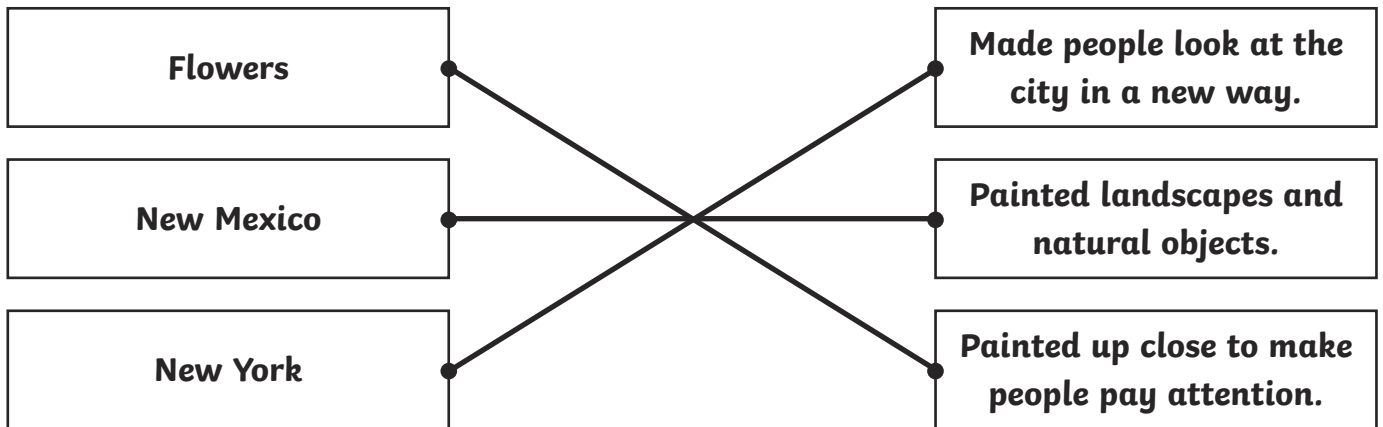
10. Imagine you are an art critic at the time that Georgia's paintings first appeared. Write a short review of the paintings, explaining how they make you feel.

Answers

1. Which words describe Georgia's beginnings? Tick **two**.

- unhappy
- humble**
- lonely
- modest**

2. Draw lines to match up these sentences about Georgia's subjects.



3. Find and copy two words that describe how the buildings of New York City made Georgia feel.

small and insignificant

4. Fill in the missing words.

Georgia painted flowers with **oil paints** on huge **canvases**.

5. What record did Georgia's artwork set in 2014?

In 2014, Georgia's artworks set a new auction record for a painting by a female artist.

6. Why do you think the second section of the text is called **A New Way of Seeing**?

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think the second section of the text is called A New Way of Seeing because in this section, Georgia talks about wanting to teach New Yorkers to see things in a new way and in the way that she sees.

7. What are the main similarities and differences between Georgia's three main painting subjects?

Pupils' own responses, such as: The main similarities between her flower paintings and her New Mexico paintings is that they were both of nature and the natural world. Her building paintings are very different because they are of the city and things made by people. The similarity between her flower and building paintings is that they both make the viewer look at the subject in a new way and make them feel small.

8. Explain why you think Georgia has been called ***The Mother of American Modernism***.
I think Georgia has been called 'The Mother of American Modernism' because she was one of the first artists in America to paint in this new, modern style.

9. ***So, he took a risk and exhibited them in his gallery in 1916...***

Explain why you think exhibiting Georgia's drawings meant Alfred was taking a risk. Give two reasons.

Pupils' own responses, such as: I think exhibiting Georgia's drawings meant Alfred was taking a risk because Georgia was a new artist and not famous yet. Also, she was a woman artist at a time when most famous artists were men, and her art was very different to any other art being made in America at the time. So, this might have meant Alfred would lose money or the exhibition would not be well attended.

10. Imagine you are an art critic at the time that Georgia's paintings first appeared. Write a short review of the paintings, explaining how they make you feel.

Pupils' own responses, such as: These spectacular paintings are unlike anything that have ever been seen in New York City before. The bright colours and huge canvases will make you stop and stare. It took me a while to work out what I was looking at but as soon as I realised, I was spellbound! The artist uses a shocking new style and technique. New York has never seen anything like this and I expect these paintings to be a big success...