

# 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. Although there were lots of chores to do on the farm, she always had a sketchbook in her hand. She was interested in 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 wanted to be a doctor and made sure her children were 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 wasn't easy being a woman artist in America at this time. Most famous artists were men and some people didn't take women artists seriously. Georgia had her first **exhibition** in 1916.

## Flowers, Buildings and New Mexico

Georgia began painting in a new and different way. Instead of painting a vase of flowers from a distance, as painters had before her, she put her face close to one flower and painted what she saw. Suddenly, the smallest flower became an enormous painting! She used oil paints in bright, bold colours and she painted on



huge canvases. People thought her paintings were very unusual because 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 her success continued to grow.

Georgia was inspired by the tall buildings of New York City where she lived. She painted towering skyscrapers from below – as a child would see them. In 1929, Georgia visited New Mexico and was amazed by the wide, open landscape. She was fascinated by the incredible rock formations, unusual

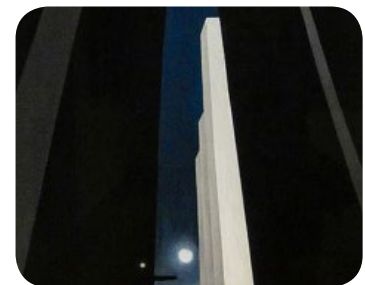


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light and animal bones dried out by the sun. She began painting landscapes and objects in New Mexico and these paintings added to her success.

### Georgia's Legacy

Georgia painted thousands of paintings in her lifetime and her work has been shown at galleries all over the world. Her **legacy** is that she is remembered as one of the greatest American artists of the twentieth century and the 'Mother of American Modernism'. The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum opened in Santa Fe in 1997 to remember her. 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 exactly as they are.

**exhibition:** An event where art such as paintings are shown, often in a gallery.

**legacy:** How someone is remembered.

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# Questions

1. What kind of farm was Georgia born on? Tick one.

- dairy
- vegetable
- wheat
- fruit

2. What was Georgia interested in as a child? Tick **two**.

- nature
- buildings
- maths
- art

3. Draw lines to show different things that happened to Georgia at different stages of her life.

As a child,	she became interested in tall buildings.
In New York	she was amazed by the landscape.
In New Mexico	her mother arranged for her to take art lessons.

4. Number the events below to show the order in which they happened in Georgia's life.

- Georgia had her first gallery show.
- 1 Georgia was born on 15<sup>th</sup> November 1887.
- Georgia visited New Mexico.
- The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum opened in Santa Fe.
- Georgia went to Chicago.

5. What does the word **abstract** mean?

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6. Why was it difficult being a woman artist at this time in America?

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7. Which of Georgia's paintings (flowers, buildings or landscapes) would you most like to own? Give two reasons for your answer.

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8. Why do you think Georgia's paintings were so popular? Give reasons for your answer.

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# Answers

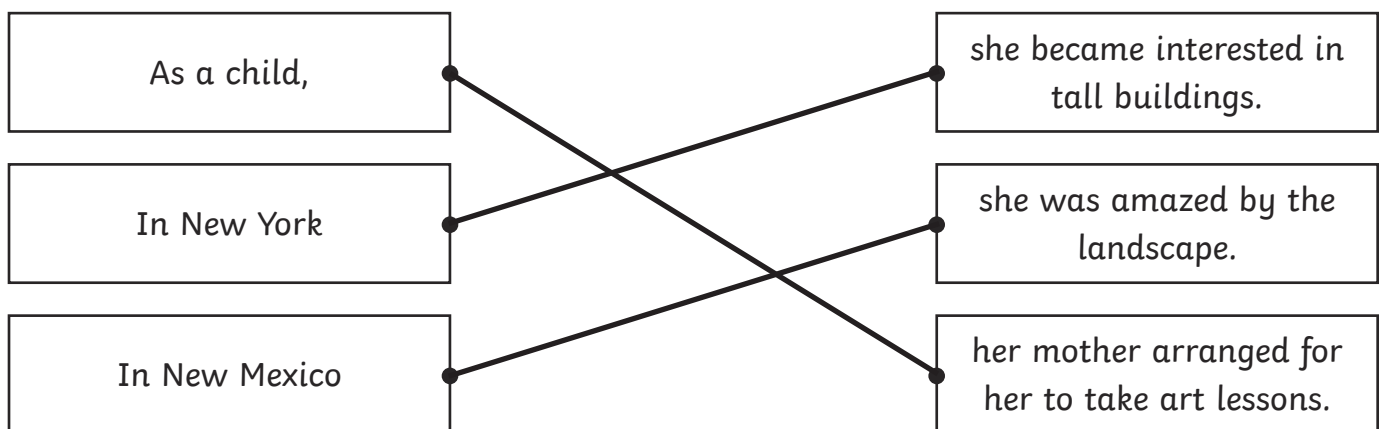
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- 3** Georgia had her first gallery show.
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- 4** Georgia visited New Mexico.
- 5** The Georgia O'Keeffe Museum opened in Santa Fe.
- 2** Georgia went to Chicago.

5. What does the word **abstract** mean?

**The word abstract means a style of art that uses shape, lines and colour in a way that does not show things exactly as they are.**

6. Why was it difficult being a woman artist at this time in America?

**It was difficult being a woman artist at this time in America because most famous artists were men and some people didn't think women could be serious artists.**

7. Which of Georgia's paintings (flowers, buildings or landscapes) would you most like to own? Give two reasons for your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I would most like to own one of Georgia's flower paintings because they are painted in bright colours and the abstract style is very unusual.**

8. Why do you think Georgia's paintings were so popular? Give reasons for your answer.

**Pupils' own responses, such as: I think Georgia's paintings were so popular because they were painted in a new and unusual way and people found this interesting because they had never seen anything like it before.**