

Georgia O'Keeffe

American painter Georgia O'Keeffe loved the earth, and it shows in her artwork. Born in Sun Prairie, Wisconsin in 1887, Georgia was one of five sisters. She moved to Virginia in 1902, and by the time she was sixteen, she had had five years of private art lessons in Wisconsin and Virginia. Georgia graduated from high school in 1905 and went to live with her aunt in Chicago. There, she enrolled in the Chicago Art Institute. Two years later, she went to New York City and attended the Art Student League. She soon became discouraged with her work and returned to Chicago where she worked for a short time as a commercial artist. In 1909, she returned to her family in Virginia. Then a friend told her about a job opening for a drawing supervisor at a school in Amarillo, Texas. Georgia applied and got the job. She taught in Texas from 1912-1914, returning home to Virginia in the summers to teach there. She then went back to New York City to attend Columbia Teacher's College. She got a teaching job in South Carolina, where her schedule was light enough to allow her time to paint.

About this time, Georgia O'Keeffe decided that she did not like painting the way she had been taught to paint. "I have things in my head that are not like what anyone has taught me...shapes and ideas so near to me...so natural to my way of being and thinking that it hasn't occurred to me to put them down," she said. She began to paint in her own way, and her art began to get attention. In 1916, Georgia's paintings were shown to a well-known gallery owner named Alfred Stieglitz. Stieglitz was very excited about Georgia's work and agreed to exhibit her paintings in his gallery. Eight years later, she became his wife.

Georgia O'Keeffe is known for her amazingly detailed paintings of flowers. She was influenced by Oriental art, and her style has been described as refined and abstract. She also painted simple buildings, like those shown in her paintings *Lake George Barn*, completed in 1926, and *Ranchos Church, Taos*, completed in 1929. She also painted views of New York City, where she lived with her husband after she got married in 1924.

Georgia O'Keeffe (cont'd)

In 1929, Georgia began to spend time in New Mexico. She loved the land and nature of the southwest and the Spanish architecture of the area as well. Her love of the southwest began to show in the themes of her paintings. One of her famous paintings, *Cow's Skull with Red*, shows a skull lying in the desert sand. Georgia said that the image was a symbol of the desert, "strangely more living than the animals walking around..." Other paintings also show dried animal bones as well as other desert images, like the wooden crucifixes that were common in the southwest region where she spent her time.

After her husband died in 1945, Georgia O'Keeffe moved to New Mexico. She often painted the adobe house that she lived in. Two examples are *Black Patio Door*, painted in 1955, and *Patio with Cloud*, painted in 1956. In the 1960's, Georgia painted clouds and landscapes seen from the sky. Later, she created more powerful and intense paintings of animals. To explain her work, Georgia O'Keeffe is quoted as saying, "I simply paint what I see." She painted what she saw until 1972 when, at the age of 84, she began to lose her eyesight. She died in 1986 when she was 98 years old.

Georgia O'Keeffe Questions

1. Georgia O'Keeffe was
 - a. a painter.
 - b. a landscaper.
 - c. a teacher.
 - d. a and c
 - e. a and b

2. How many sisters did Georgia O'Keeffe have?

3. In 1902, Georgia moved
 - a. from Wisconsin to Virginia.
 - b. from Virginia to Wyoming.
 - c. from Virginia to Chicago.
 - d. from Chicago to New York.

4. In which of the following places did Georgia O'Keeffe not live?
 - a. New York
 - b. Wyoming
 - c. Virginia
 - d. New Mexico

5. Georgia O'Keeffe learned to paint from
 - a. The Chicago Art Institute.
 - b. The Art Student League.
 - c. private teachers.
 - d. All of these

Georgia O'Keeffe Questions (cont'd)

6. Georgia said, "I have things in my head that are like no one ever taught me..." because
 - a. she wanted to paint her own way.
 - b. she wanted to quit painting.
 - c. she did not know how to teach.
 - d. None of these

7. When Georgia described the subject of one of her paintings as "strangely more living than the animals walking around...", she was talking about
 - a. the desert.
 - b. the door of her house.
 - c. a flower.
 - d. a cow's skull.

8. Aside from her southwestern theme, Georgia O'Keeffe is best known for painting
 - a. animals.
 - b. people she knew.
 - c. flowers.
 - d. city scenes.

9. Name one of Georgia O'Keeffe's paintings with a southwestern theme.

10. How old was Georgia O'Keeffe when she stopped painting?
 - a. 56
 - b. 72
 - c. 84
 - d. 99

Name _____

Date _____

Georgia O'Keeffe Answers

1. d
2. 4
3. a
4. b
5. d
6. a
7. d
8. c
9. *Cow's Skull with Red; Black Patio Door; or Patio with Cloud*
10. c