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## Art Masterpiece: Poppy, 1927-Georgia O'Keeffe

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**Keywords:** Vantage Point, Blending, Water-color

**Grade:** 4<sup>th</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup>

**Lesson:** Close-Up Flower-Water Color



**Art Print:** A variety of O'Keeffe art prints can be used in exchange of *Poppy*. See school coordinator to confirm which print will be showcased.

### Meet The Artist:

- Born in 1887 on a Wisconsin farm, Georgia was one of seven children. She and her sisters were given art lessons which was uncommon for girls at that time. (She was born about the same time the telephone and light bulb were invented).
- By age 13, Georgia knew she wanted to be an artist. She was very independent and didn't like to do things other children did. She liked to be different and rebelled against being like anybody else. She spent much of her time alone and said she used her imagination for company.
- As a young woman, she moved first to Chicago and then to New York to study art. In New York, she met photographer and gallery owner, Alfred Stieglitz. They were married in 1924 and he encouraged her to paint fulltime.
- Her work from this period included many oversized paintings of flowers. O'Keeffe once said that since we often ignore them in life, she decided to make her flowers too large to be ignored. In these paintings, she reduced nature to its simplest, abstract form by using a very close-up view.

- Beginning in her 40s, she was drawn to New Mexico, which inspired her later paintings. These often included landscapes of desert and animal bones bleached by the sun. Georgia painted over 900 paintings in her life time. She retired in Santa Fe, New Mexico, and painted until her eye sight failed. She died in 1986 at 98 years old.

## **Discussion of Art Prints:**

**Please use smaller prints/magazine pictures along with the main art print to compare flowers, and look for different use of color etc.**

**What do you see in the painting?** A portion of a flower.

Explain briefly the artist's **vantage point**. (The vantage point is where you think the artist seems to have been standing when the art was created. Near/far, over/under)

**Does this flower look like it is shown in the vantage point of a bird or bee?** (Bee's Eye View)

**Does this flower look delicate or strong? What makes it look this way?**

(O'Keeffe often made her paintings simple but they still appear visually strong. The size of the flower makes it seem more powerful than real life. The colors used also add an extra sense of delicacy or strength.)

**How many different colors did O'Keeffe use to create this flower?** (Note how smoothly the colors are blended into one another.)

**Why do you think the artist used dark colors towards the center of each flower?** (The shading -or creating of shadow, causes the flower to appear three-dimensional and gives it dimension.)

**What type of art media (paint) did this artist use?** Watercolor!

## Interesting FYI:

What's missing? No Signature, Georgia O'Keeffe chose not to sign her paintings she felt that the painting itself was a personal signature.

## Watercolor Paint DEMONSTRATION: (before project time) 3 minutes.

\*\*\* Demonstrate by using the doc-camera.

Begin by telling the students that WATER will be an important part of getting the desired look on their painting. They will use water to move the paint around on the WATERCOLOR paper and to create the desired color. Unlike when using tempera paint water is more than just for cleaning brushes.

First show how to apply the paint on the paper using just enough water for it to glide on. Color will be intense, vivid, and true.

Next, show how you can transition from vivid color to a very light shade by slowly adding water to the paper. Drag the color around the paper with the brush.

Explain that they will dip the brush directly in to the paint but other times they will choose to skip the paint and simply use the brush to add more water and move the pigment around. **Water is part of the painting process. That is why it is called Water-Color.**

Too much water? No worry....dabbing with paper towels can remove excess water.

### **Next show color BLENDING:**

Explain Blending is a technique done by the artist to create new color by layering multiple colors on top of each other or merging them together. Demonstrate by applying blue on one side of paper, Red on the other. With a water filled brush show how by moving the two different colors towards each other they blend and become purple.

**Educate the students on the uniqueness of watercolor paper.** A special paper designed specifically for watercolor paint. It won't dissolve like regular paper. In order for an artist to have success they must have the right supplies. What a treat for these students to work with real art media. Make a big out of this luxury. Watercolor paper is expensive.

## PROJECT: Watercolor Flowers

**Activity:** We are going to discover that painting a flower close-up requires some careful observation and attention to the smallest detail. The results, however, are beautiful on a large scale!

**Materials:** 9" x 12" sheet of watercolor paper, scrap paper for sketching, watercolor paints, paintbrushes, cups for water, paper towels for cleaning brushes, pencils, artificial flowers, or photographs of flowers.

**Optional:** Colored paper for mounting. 5 x5" Paper frames if available – available at IRC.

### **Process:**

1. Look at Georgia O'Keeffe's flower paintings. Notice how the flowers fill the canvas, with the blossom edges disappearing right off the edges.

2. Set out artificial flowers if you have them, or use photos.
3. Ask students to choose a particular flower and look closely at it. Students can use the paper frames as a visual aid to help them “see” the enlarged area of the silk flower or photos.
4. Lightly sketch an enlarged flower onto the paper covering as much of the paper as possible. The edges of the flower should touch or go off the edges.
5. Paint the drawings with watercolors.
6. Encourage students to work carefully trying techniques that you demonstrated.  
Create details in the flower with the watercolors. Try mixing colors on the paper to create soft edges.
7. Let dry. These look great mounted on bright colored construction paper!!





Chandler Unified School District Art Masterpiece



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**Brief info about the project:** Students discussed perspective and vantage point in various O'Keefe paintings. They each created their own enlarged flowers using the perspective of a "bees-eye" view.

Picture of artwork



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