

Georgia O'Keeffe Inspired Art Lesson

An activity appropriate for ages 10 thru adult

Developed by Christine Elder
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Pelvis IV, 1944 by Georgia O'Keeffe

Sun-bleached bones were most wonderful against the blue - that blue that will always be there as it is now after all man's destruction is finished.

—Georgia O'Keeffe

INTRODUCTION

In this lesson, we will learn about the 20th century American artist, Georgia O'Keeffe. We'll explore her life, approach to art, and one of her favorite subjects—bones and skulls, and use this as an inspirational jumping off point for creating your own drawing. First, you'll learn about the artist in a movie, then view some of her work for inspiration, then watch a video tutorial on how one can use chalk pastels to emulate her style. Lastly, you'll create your own Georgia inspired artwork using your medium and subject of choice. So follow the four steps on the following pages and check out the additional resources too. Good luck!

1) GETTING TO KNOW GEORGIA



Georgia O'Keeffe, by Dennis Brack, 1977

Starting in the 1930's Georgia began visiting the American southwest where she was inspired to paint the desert landscapes, and the bones she found there.

Georgia collected her first bones in the New Mexico desert in 1930, and brought them back to her home in New York. In 1931 she finished her first painting in this style and titled it *Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue*.

Watch this [4-minute video](#) of Georgia talking about her life and work, which focuses on her time in the southwest and how the bones of the desert inspired decades of her work. If you have a bit more time, you might also like to watch this [13-minute video](#) called Georgia O'Keeffe 'A Life in Art'.

2) VIEW EXAMPLES OF GEORGIA'S WORK FOR INSPIRATION



Cow's Skull: Red, White, and Blue, 1931 by Georgia O'Keeffe

View examples of Georgia's bone and skull [paintings on the web](#) or in books such as those available on [Amazon](#).

As you are viewing her work, notice aspects of her style that you can emulate. Her favorite subjects were those found in nature, especially things that most people might not notice or think are pretty – like bones and skeletons, but also tiny flowers, seashells, stones and leaves. She blended realism with abstraction. She used clean lines and bold areas of color. She often chose to work in a limited palette of analogous colors, either warm or cool, often blended softly into each other. Her bones were often depicted as floating in the sky with a simple landscape in the background.

3) TECHNIQUE DEMONSTRATION



Watch this 4 minute [YouTube video demonstration](#) in which Christine introduces Georgia O'Keeffe and then create a chalk pastel drawing of a pelvic bone in the style of Georgia. You can also find it here on her website: www.christineelder.com/georgia

4) YOUR TURN TO CREATE

Here are the steps to follow in creating your own Georgia inspired piece.



1. Get inspired by viewing examples of other students' work from this art lesson on the last page of this document.
2. Gather your art supplies and work space. Use the medium of your choice to create your artwork – I used chalk pastel in my video demonstration but you might try oil pastels, charcoals, or paints like watercolor or acrylic.
3. Use photographs of bones or real bones as your subject matter.
4. You may want to add a flower too, as Georgia sometimes did, again using either photographs or real flowers.
5. Refer to examples of Georgia's work but use your own style. Think about what aspects of her style and composition you want to emulate.
6. Do a preliminary sketch of your composition in pencil.
7. Finish your drawing or painting in your medium of choice.
8. When everyone is finished, you may like to take some time to view each other's work and/or volunteer to talk about the ways in which you incorporated the style of Georgia O'Keeffe into your own work.

ADDITIONAL RESOURCES

Movie Georgia O'Keeffe 'A Life in Art'(14 minutes)

- <https://www.okeeffemuseum.org/about-georgia-okeeffe>
- Try this link if the above is outdated: <https://vimeo.com/134768633>

Bones

Use photographs or real ones. Two resources for purchasing real bones:

- [The Bone Room in Berkeley](#)
- [Carolina Biological Supply](#)

Art Supplies

My two favorite sources for ordering art supplies online (especially for getting bulk discounts):

- [Cheap Joe's](#)
- [Nasco Arts and Crafts](#)

Books

These books feature large color reproductions of Georgia's paintings

- *Georgia O'Keeffe: In the West* by Doris Bry and Nicholas Callaway
- *Georgia O'Keeffe Museum Collection* by Barbara Buhler Lynes

Other Resources to Learn about Georgia

- [National Gallery of Art](#) - A kid's lesson plan including books about the life and art of Georgia
- [Wikipedia entry for Georgia](#)
- [Georgia O'Keeffe Museum in Santa Fe, New Mexico](#)

Learn more about this art lesson's author, Christine Elder

- To see more of Christine's art and tutorials visit www.ChristineElder.com

EXAMPLES OF STUDENTS' ARTWORK TO SERVE AS INSPIRATION FOR YOUR OWN PROJECTS!

