



When you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for the moment. I want to give that world to someone else.

**Georgia O'Keeffe**

American artist **Georgia O'Keeffe (1887–1986)** is known for her paintings of flowers, bones, shells, stones, leaves, trees, mountains, and other natural forms.

Painted in 1930, O'Keeffe's series of six canvases depicting a jack-in-the-pulpit shows the artist's deep interest in the design of nature. She bequeathed *Jack-in-the-Pulpit II–VI* to the National Gallery of Art in 1987, and the works are on view in the East Building.

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV* (detail), 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

who?  
what?  
how?

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. II



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. II*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. III*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. III



Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. IV*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. V*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

Georgia O'Keeffe, *Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. VI*, 1930, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

# 1 Inspiration from nature

O'Keeffe first painted flowers when she was a child growing up in rural Wisconsin. She decided to be an artist at the age of twelve, and during her long career (she lived to be 99 years old!), she made over 200 flower paintings. Some of O'Keeffe's favorite subjects were lilacs, daisies, irises, petunias, calla lilies, orchids, sunflowers, roses, and jack-in-the-pulpits.

O'Keeffe was first introduced to jack-in-the-pulpits by her high school art teacher during a lesson. Her teacher pointed out the plant's strange shapes and color variations. O'Keeffe said, "This was the first time I remember examining a flower... she started me looking at things—looking very carefully at details. It was certainly the first time my attention was called to the outline and color of any growing thing with the idea of drawing or painting it."

In 1930 O'Keeffe found jack-in-the-pulpits in the woods near her summer home at Lake George (in upstate New York) and was inspired to create a series of paintings.

# 2 A unique flower

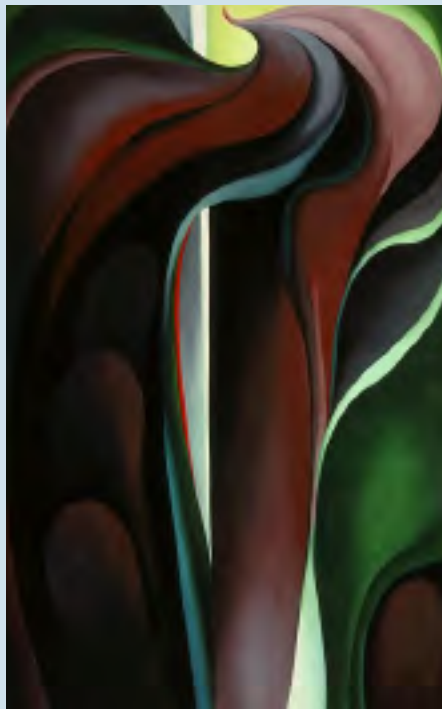
The jack-in-the-pulpit is a North American wildflower found in shady, cool woods and swamps and can grow between one and three feet tall. The plant begins as a sort of green vase (called a spathe), made from a single leaf, with a stalk (called a spadix) growing up in the middle of it. A leaf-hood folds gracefully over its top to protect the tiny flower from the wind and rain. Typically green with deep purple or red-brown stripes, the flower blooms from April through June. During the late summer and early autumn, the stalk grows a cluster of red berries.

It was named jack-in-the-pulpit because in early New England many pulpits were covered. The preacher stood inside very much like the way the spadix sits inside the hooded spathe.

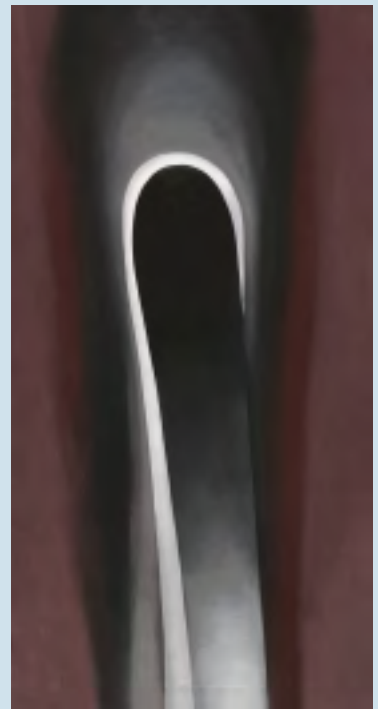
Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. iv



Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. v



Jack-in-the-Pulpit No. vi



### 3 A closer look

Concentrating on a single flower, O’Keeffe invites us to contemplate the intricate structure of the jack-in-the-pulpit. Some of the paintings show curling leaves and sky, and in others the flower fills the entire canvas. Each painting in the series brings us closer inside the center of the flower; with *No. VI*, we see only the jack/spadix.

O’Keeffe focuses our attention on the flower by magnifying and simplifying its form.

“It is only by deduction, by elimination, by emphasis, that we get at the real meaning of things.”

Alfred Stieglitz, *Georgia O’Keeffe*, 1925, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection

Photographer Alfred Stieglitz exhibited O’Keeffe’s work in New York City. They were married from 1924 until his death in 1946, and O’Keeffe gave a collection of Stieglitz’s photographs to the National Gallery.

### 4 Explore with your own eyes

Compare the five paintings. Look at the colors used for each painting.

**Which two paintings are the most similar? How?**

**Which two are most different?**

**Which one interests you the most? Why?**



## booknook

These books about Georgia O'Keeffe can be found at your local library or bookstore.

### My Name is Georgia

By Jeanette Winter | ages 4 and up

### Georgia's Bones

By Jen Bryant, illustrated by Bethanne Anderson | ages 4 and up

### Through Georgia's Eyes

By Rachel Rodríguez, illustrated by Julie Paschkis | ages 4 and up

### Georgia O'Keeffe

By Mike Venezia | ages 6 and up

### Georgia O'Keeffe: Portraits of Women Artists for Children

By Robyn Montana Turner | ages 6 and up

### Georgia O'Keeffe: The "Wideness and Wonder" of Her World

By Beverly Gherman | ages 9 and up

### Georgia O'Keeffe

By Ruth Thomson | ages 9 and up

### Georgia O'Keeffe

By Linda Lowery, illustrated by Rochelle Draper | ages 9 and up

### The Spirit Catchers: An Encounter with Georgia O'Keeffe

By Kathleen Kudlinski | ages 12 and up

# try this! activity

## Nature Study

O'Keeffe picked up seashells as she walked along the beach. She displayed her collection at her home in New Mexico, often drawing her favorite shells. By surrounding herself with objects from nature, she could make careful observations, analyzing shapes and patterns and recording colors and essential details.

O'Keeffe believed that "to see takes time like to have a friend takes time." It takes a lot of careful looking to get to know something well.



top: Georgia O'Keeffe, *The Shell*, 1934, National Gallery of Art, Washington, From the Collection of Dorothy Braude Edinburg

above: Georgia O'Keeffe, *Shell No. 1*, 1928, National Gallery of Art, Washington, Alfred Stieglitz Collection, Bequest of Georgia O'Keeffe

## Make a series of drawings

### You will need:

A pad of paper

A pencil, colored pencils, crayons, colored chalk, pastels, markers, and/or watercolors

First, select something from nature to study—a flower, leaf, shell, or stone. Set it on a table and sit nearby with your pad and drawing materials. Examine the object carefully. Study the colors, shapes, patterns, and designs. Consider what makes the object unique.

Make a series of drawings exploring this object. With each drawing, try to fill the entire sheet of paper.

### Experiment with color

- Try drawing the object with only a pencil, using no colors.
- Then, draw the object with colors that are as close to the natural object as possible.
- Next, draw the object using only two colors—any two of your choice.
- Now, draw the object with any colors you want—use your imagination!

### Explore design

- Make a drawing of the entire object.
- Then, make a drawing of a different view—turn the object around to show another side.
- Select a part of the object—just one detail—and draw that part as if you were looking at it with a magnifying glass.
- Imagine how the object would look to a fly—make a drawing showing a “bug’s-eye” view of your object.

Finally, draw the object in an imaginary landscape. You may choose to include sky, water, land, animals, or buildings in your picture.

**“Each shell was a beautiful world in itself... I have always enjoyed painting them—and even now, living in the desert, the sea comes back to me when I hold one to my ear.”**