

Georgia O'Keeffe Monologue Sample 1

Grades K–2

My approach to painting is different from what everyone else is doing. Moving against the crowd is hard! But I persist. I continue on because I have things in my head that are not like what anyone taught me—shapes and ideas so near to me, so natural to my way of being and thinking. I cannot just walk by a flower without looking! Have you ever truly looked at a flower? I mean really looked at it? Come closer. Hold it in your hand. Now look. Look at the center. The way the lines branch out and create striking patterns. Notice the way the color is light in some places and dark in others . . . the way the contrast of light and dark make you want to look and look and look. If you take a flower in your hand and really look at it, it's your world for a moment. Do you have things in your life that speak to you like this?

Grades 3–5

I always knew I was an artist. I remember walking the hills of Sun Prairie in the 1890s as a child and feeling drawn to rocks and plants in the beautiful Wisconsin landscapes. Even bones fascinated me. As I walked, something would capture my attention and I'd pick it up. I was drawn to it. Later, I'd sketch it. My parents and siblings were always telling me nature belongs outside and made me move my piles of treasures outside. I loved exploring the shape and color of a thing through color and line.

I took art lessons at home and drawing lessons from my grammar teacher. And my teachers in school encouraged me. But after high school, I realized I wasn't good enough to make a career of painting realistically. I had attended the Art Students League in New York City in 1907, and I grew frustrated with my abilities. I felt for a time that I wasn't successful. I guess we all question ourselves along the way. I didn't want to work in traditional ways. And so, I stopped painting. I walked away from it. I destroyed every piece completed there. I was done with painting. I couldn't communicate in the traditional methods being used. I felt...stifled...like I couldn't breathe.

So, I felt lost for a time. I found other things to do, of course, instead of painting, and life went on. I was a commercial artist for a while; I taught art in an elementary school. And then...one summer I took a course in art for teachers. And...everything changed. I connected with a professor who opened the world for me. Professor Arthur Wesley Dow was his name, and he showed me that my art could be about feeling. About what was inside me. He encouraged me to work with light and dark color and line. It was a moment for me...a turning point that seemed to snap things into focus in my life. I revisited my passion for nature. I believe the natural world has a deep power. The power of life in a flower, or a skull whitened by the sun is equal to the strength of a NYC skyline. Truly. It is.

I had found my true work.

Georgia O'Keeffe Monologue Sample 2

Grades 6–12

(Georgia O'Keeffe has a letter in her hand. She turns it over and reads the sender's address. She smiles slightly.)

The great photographer Alfred Stieglitz. Hmm, I wonder...

(Carefully she opens the letter and reads.)

Well, I'll be. One brief visit and he's reaching out. Good. My work has sparked his attention.

(She reads a quote from the letter.) "I can't stop thinking about your drawings and paintings. Your poppies, sunflowers, and jimsonweed. The blue Texas sky and lavender dawns. Ms. O'Keeffe, you intrigue me. You see the world in a way that is unique—through shape, color, and abstraction..."

(She laughs.) Too true, and I've been reprimanded for it all my life. How is it that you recognize my vision so quickly, so fully?

(She reads on.) "You must exhibit in New York. Won't you come? *(pausing)* Please consider it. I will raise the funding you need to paint full-time. Your work should be allowed to flourish. There's a whole new world for you here."

A whole new world. *(She looks out the window.)* Perhaps a whole new world is what's needed. I am well aware, Mr. Stieglitz, that I live in a time when society does not deem it proper for women to become artists. I've heard again and again that teaching art is not the proper place for a woman. "Women aren't meant to be artists!" Ridiculous! I have never followed the mainstream. But you see me. You understand my work.

I remember my first prize for an early painting I called *Dead Rabbit with Copper Pot*. I could feel the excitement coursing through my veins—the sense that this was my life unfolding. I have the same feeling now. My fingers are trembling. Alfred Stieglitz, he intrigues me. His style is distinctive. He's a pioneer, as I am. Though it's easier for a man these days to pursue his vision, he recognizes my view of the world.

All right, Stieglitz, I accept your invitation. *(She sighs with anticipation and looks into the distance.)* Georgia O'Keeffe in New York City.

Tonight, I'll sleep under the stars on the roof. Under the Texas sky I love so much. It will be hard to leave. The spirit of the land here inspires my work. The wind, the sky—there's no other place I feel so at home. Nature is my true company. But this Alfred Stieglitz. There is something about him.

(She gathers her things and strides confidently out of the room.)