

# Outstanding O’Keeffe-Inspired Art

by Debi West

Welcome to the first lesson in this year’s “eARTh ... It’s got ART” yearlong curriculum series! We begin the school year in the continent of North America.

As students enter the art room, they immediately are excited to begin their year of learning about our world, through the visual arts. They see how the room is set up for them to know what the theme will be for the year,



Acting as “art detectives,” students zoom in and see the beauty of nature.

finding a globe (or, if possible, globes at each table) and a huge wall map. Together, teacher and children will keep track of your art “travels” through the year.

Classroom teachers will be equally excited that they will have a great extension for their social studies units. I feel it is really important to communicate with each grade level, explaining the art curriculum and seeing how it can fit into the classroom learning.

For example, as we started the year in North America, our fourth-graders were studying the colonial times of early America, while my first-graders were studying about the life and times in Mexico ... an immediate perfect fit!

The always-successful third-grade lesson, Georgia O’Keeffe-Inspired

Flowers, is presented here. The other five lessons—also successful—are available on the *Arts & Activities* Web site ([www.artsandactivities.com](http://www.artsandactivities.com)). When you arrive to the home page, click the A&A online button. Once there, click on the “eARTh ... it’s got ART” globe to access the additional lesson plans.

In the Georgia O’Keeffe-flowers lesson, every child leaves the art room happy and proud of their completed pieces. Not only is the finished product amazing, the process involved is very deep and truly allows the students to “see” the beauty in nature by becoming an art detective.

Students are taught about the life of Georgia O’Keeffe, giving them a better understanding of her move to New Mexico and her desire to really “see” nature and draw through the elements of art.

Once the introduction is complete, set up a still life of various plastic flowers at each of the tables in the art room. Have students look at their still life and have mini-group discussions about what they see.

Then they are asked to make a paper viewfinder, and are taught how to “zoom” in on the flowers, finding unique areas, colors, lines and shapes to draw on their paper. When the students see an area they are most happy with, they begin to sketch out their images using a pencil, looking closely at the lines and shapes they see.

The following class period students continue to draw, but this time they aren’t looking at their flowers, they are adding their own creative lines and shapes to give their art *ownership*. Once the drawings are complete, students outline their pencil lines with a black felt-tip pen, making sure to cover all pencil lines.

Then, to complete this day’s

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**NORTH AMERICA**  
grade level 3

## LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Third-grade students will ...

- learn about the art of Georgia O’Keeffe and specifically how she “zoomed” in on nature to see the beauty in our environment. They will learn to really “see.”
- think about how they use the art elements to create an original piece of art.
- learn vocabulary words: nature, abstract art, cool colors, warm colors, mixed media, line, shape, color and space.

## MATERIALS

- Globe(s) and large map
- 12" x 18" white drawing paper
- Pencils
- Permanent markers
- Plastic flowers (a set for each table)
- Oil pastels
- Tempera paint
- Brushes
- Chisel-tip markers
- Reproduction of O’Keeffe flowers
- Handouts about Georgia O’Keeffe

## RHYTHM-ONG

O’Keeffe drew flowers, drew them big, Zoomin’ in is what she did!  
Lines and shapes and colors too,  
O’Keeffe made flowers and so can you!

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## NORTH AMERICA

The following lesson plans are available on [www.artsandactivities.com](http://www.artsandactivities.com)

- Kindergarten:** Self-Portraiture (in the style of many North American artists throughout time)  
**Grade 1:** Papel Picado (Mexico)  
**Grade 2:** Miriam Schapiro Collages (Canada)  
**Grade 4:** Candle Drawing/Making (Colonies)  
**Grade 5:** Digital Photography Inspired by Andy Warhol and Grant Wood (United States)



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## EARTH

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activities, they quickly paint in the larger areas using either a cool or a warm color palette, and either tempera or acrylic paint. I have found that when painting with my elementary students, they are most successful when they use a specific color palette, as opposed to giving them all of the colors at one time, which tends to turn their art into odd shades of brown and gray.

The following class period, students are asked to complete their paintings by “painting” with their markers. I have found that a chisel-tip marker works best for getting solid colors down.

We have saved the best for last: the addition of the oil pastels! If students chose to use warm-colored paints and markers, they will begin to use a cool-color oil pastel to embellish areas of their art. This is a tricky process, as students often want to draw heavy lines, so it’s important to model this with the stu-

*“Not only is the finished product amazing, the process involved is very deep”*

dents by using the side of the oil pastel and then blending with their fingers when they are done.

The final step is to outline the entire piece again, but this time with a black oil pastel, blended in lightly with their fingers. The results are nothing less than AMAZING! Students not only learn about an artist from North America, specifically the United States (Wisconsin, New York and ultimately New Mexico), they also learn how to look closely at nature; “zoom” in using a viewfinder; use the art elements to guide them through their art making; and create a wonderful abstract-ish artwork in the style of O’Keeffe! ■

Currently an art teacher at North Gwinnet High School in Suwanee, Ga., Debi West wrote her “eARTH ... it’s got ART” curriculum while teaching at Level Creek Elementary, also in Suwanee. She also is a past-president of the Georgia Art Education Association and owner of the Crystal Collage Children’s Art Studio.