

## READING PASSAGE 1

You should spend about 20 minutes on **Question 1 – 13**, which are based on Reading Passage 1 below

### Georgia O'Keeffe

For seven decades, Georgia O'Keeffe (1887-1986) was a major figure in American art. Remarkably, she remained independent from shifting art trends and her work stayed true to her own vision, which was based on finding the essential, abstract forms in nature. With exceptionally keen powers of observation and great finesse with a paintbrush, she recorded subtle nuances of colour, shape, and light that enlivened her paintings and attracted a wide audience.

Born in 1887 near Sun Prairie, Wisconsin to cattle breeders Francis and Ida O'Keeffe, Georgia was raised on their farm along with her six siblings. By the time she graduated from high school in 1905, she had determined to make her way as an artist. She studied the techniques of traditional painting at the Art Institute of Chicago school (1905) and the Art Students League of New York (1907-8). After attending university and then training college, she became an art teacher and taught in elementary schools, high schools, and colleges in Virginia, Texas, and South Carolina from 1911 to 1918.

During this period, O'Keeffe began to experiment with creating abstract compositions in charcoal, and produced a series of innovative drawings that led her art in a new direction. She sent some of these drawings to a friend in New York, who showed them to art collector and photographer Alfred Stieglitz in January 1916.

Stieglitz was impressed, and exhibited the drawings later that year at his gallery on Fifth Avenue, New York City, where the works of many avant-garde artists and photographers were introduced to the American public.

With Stieglitz's encouragement and promise of financial support, O'Keeffe arrived in New York in June 1918 to begin a career as an artist. For the next three decades, Stieglitz vigorously promoted her work in twenty-two solo exhibitions and numerous group installations. The two were married in 1924. The ups and downs

of their personal and professional relationship were recorded in Stieglitz's celebrated black-and-white portraits of O'Keeffe, taken over the course of twenty years (1917-37).

By the mid-1920s, O'Keeffe was recognized as one of America's most important and successful artists, widely known for the architectural pictures that dramatically depict the soaring skyscrapers of New York. But most often, she painted botanical subjects, inspired by annual trips to the Stieglitz family summer home. In her magnified images depicting flowers, begun in 1924, O'Keeffe brings the viewer right into the picture.

Enlarging the tiniest details to fill an entire metre-wide canvas emphasized their shapes and lines and made them appear abstract. Such daring compositions helped establish O'Keeffe's reputation as an innovative modernist.

In 1929, O'Keeffe made her first extended trip to the state of New Mexico. It was a visit that had a lasting impact on her life, and an immediate effect on her work. Over the next two decades she made almost annual trips to New Mexico, staying up to six months there, painting in relative solitude, then returning to New York each winter to exhibit the new work at Stieglitz's gallery. This pattern continued until she moved permanently to New Mexico in 1949.

There, O'Keeffe found new inspiration: at first, it was the numerous sun-bleached bones she came across in the state's rugged terrain that sparked her imagination. Two of her earliest and most celebrated Southwestern paintings exquisitely reproduce a cow skull's weathered surfaces, jagged edges, and irregular openings. Later, she also explored another variation on this theme in her large series of Pelvis pictures, which focused on the contrasts between convex and concave surfaces, and solid and open spaces.

However, it was the region's spectacular landscape, with its unusual geological formations, vivid colours, clarity of light, and exotic vegetation, that held the artist's imagination for more than four decades. Often, she painted the rocks, cliffs, and mountains in striking close-up, just as she had done with her botanical subjects.

O'Keeffe eventually owned two homes in New Mexico - the first, her summer retreat at Ghost Ranch, was nestled beneath 200-metre cliffs, while the second, used as her winter residence, was in the small town of Abiquiu. While both locales provided a wealth of imagery for her paintings, one feature of the Abiquiu house - the large walled patio with its black door - was particularly inspirational. In more than thirty pictures between 1946 and 1960, she reinvented the patio into an abstract arrangement of geometric shapes.

From the 1950s into the 1970s, O'Keeffe travelled widely, making trips to Asia, the Middle East, and Europe. Flying in planes inspired her last two major series – aerial views of rivers and expansive paintings of the sky viewed from just above clouds. In both series, O'Keeffe increased the size of her canvases, sometimes to mural proportions, reflecting perhaps her newly expanded view of the world. When in 1965 she successfully translated one of her cloud motifs to a monumental canvas measuring 6 metres in length (with the help of assistants), it was an enormous challenge and a special feat for an artist nearing eighty years of age.

The last two decades of the artist's life were relatively unproductive as ill health and blindness hindered her ability to work. O'Keeffe died in 1986 at the age of ninety-eight, but her rich legacy of some 900 paintings has continued to attract subsequent generations of artists and art lovers who derive inspiration from these very American images.

### Questions 1-7

Complete the notes below.

Choose **ONE WORD ONLY** from the passage for each answer.

#### The life and work of Georgia O'Keeffe

- studied art, then worked as a **(1)**..... in various places in the USA
- created drawings using **(2)**.....which were exhibited in New York City
- moved to New York and became famous for her paintings of the city's **(3)**.....
- produced a series of innovative close-up paintings of **(4)**.....
- went to New Mexico and was initially inspired to paint the many **(5)**..... that could be found there
- continued to paint various features that together formed the dramatic **(6)**..... of New Mexico for over forty years
- travelled widely by plane in later years, and painted pictures of clouds and **(7)**..... seen from above

### Questions 8-13

Do the following statements agree with the information given in Reading Passage 1?

**TRUE** if the statement agrees with the information

**FALSE** if the statement contradicts the information

**NOT GIVEN** if there is no information on this

8. Georgia O'Keeffe's style was greatly influenced by the changing fashions in art over the seven decades of her career.
9. When O'Keeffe finished high school, she had already made her mind up about the career that she wanted.
10. Alfred Stieglitz first discovered O'Keeffe's work when she sent some abstract drawings to his gallery in New York City.
11. O'Keeffe was the subject of Stieglitz's photographic work for many years.
12. O'Keeffe's paintings of the patio of her house in Abiquiú were among the artist's favourite works.
13. O'Keeffe produced a greater quantity of work during the 1950s to 1970s than at any other time in her life.