

2014 *Georgia History Festival* Featured Historical Figure Teacher Guide  
Flannery O'Connor

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**Introduction:**

Grade Level: 6-12

Subject Area: Georgia & United States History or Georgia Authors

GHS Link: <http://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/online-exhibits/featured-historical-figures/flannery-oconnor/>

**Explanation:**

No, Flannery O'Connor is not named specifically in any of the Georgia Performance Standards, but that does not mean your students can't study her life and legacy and still review and prepare for end of year tests! The biographical materials available for Flannery O'Connor on the Georgia Historical Society website and the accompanying "Guided Reading Worksheet" are designed to help students learn about an influential Georgian while also learning about Georgia/United States History and practicing their literacy skills.

Below you will find a list of state and national standards correlated to the "Guided Reading Worksheet." The worksheet is designed to guide students through reading the online biographical resources. The worksheet helps students practice informational text analysis by asking guiding questions. The worksheet is divided into sections that correspond with the pages of the Flannery O'Connor materials. Students can be assigned the entire worksheet or portions depending on the needs of your classroom.

\*NOTE: The teacher guide and student guided worksheet does not include the page "School Days" because this content was added to the online resources later than the rest.\*

**State and National Standards:**

The following standards are met if students complete the "Guided Reading Worksheet" developed to support interaction with the online biographical resources. Teachers may also use these standards as a start to creating their own activities based on the online biographical resources.

Common Core Georgia Performance Standards

6<sup>th</sup>-8<sup>th</sup> Grades

- **L6-8RH1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources.
- **L6-8RH2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of the source distinct from prior knowledge or opinions.
- **L6-8RH4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including

vocabulary specific to domains related to history/social studies.

- **L6-8RH5:** Describe how a text presents information (e.g., sequentially, comparatively, causally).

9<sup>th</sup>-10<sup>th</sup> Grades

- **L9-10RH1:** Cite specific textual evidence to support analysis of primary and secondary sources, attending to such features as the date and origin of the information.
- **L9-10RH2:** Determine the central ideas or information of a primary or secondary source; provide an accurate summary of how key events or ideas develop over the course of the text.
- **L9-10RH3:** Analyze in detail a series of events described in a text; determine whether earlier events caused later ones or simply preceded them.
- **L9-10RH4:** Determine the meaning of words and phrases as they are used in a text, including vocabulary describing political, social, or economic aspects of history/social science.

Georgia Performance Standards

- **SS8H8** The student will analyze the important events that occurred after World War I and their impact on Georgia.
- **SS8H9** The student will describe the impact of World War II on Georgia's development economically, socially, and politically.
- **SSUSH17** The student will analyze the causes and consequences of the Great Depression.
- **SSUSH18** The student will describe Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal as a response to the depression and compare the ways governmental programs aided those in need.
- **SSUSH19** The student will identify the origins, major developments, and the domestic impact of World War II, especially the growth of the federal government.

National Council for the Social Studies

- **NCSS #1** Culture
- **NCSS #2** Time, Continuity, and Change

Guided Reading Worksheet  
2014 Featured Historical Figure Flannery O'Connor

**Directions:** Complete the guided reading worksheet as you learn about Flannery O'Connor on the Georgia Historical Society website. <http://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/online-exhibits/featured-historical-figures/flannery-oconnor/>

Brief Biography

1. *Before you read!* What do you already know about Flannery O'Connor? Make a list or write a few sentences to show what you already know or think you know about Flannery O'Connor.

**Everything I know or think I know about Flannery O'Connor:**

2. *After you read!* After reading the Brief Biography page, think of a few things you expect to learn more about in the pages to follow. It might help you to preview the page titles which are listed in the side bar to the right of the text. Write your answer in a list or full sentences.

**What I expect to learn on the pages that follow:**

### Growing up in Savannah

1. *Before you read!* Before you read the “Growing up in Savannah” section, read Flannery O’Connor’s quote at the top of the page. Why do you think the Georgia Historical Society included a quote from Flannery O’Connor on each of the pages?

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2. *After you read!* After you read “Growing up in Savannah” fill-in the blank on these sentences.

Flannery O’Connor was born in \_\_\_\_\_, Georgia on March 25, 1925.

Flannery O’Connor was a faithful \_\_\_\_\_ her entire life.

*Pathé News* filmed Flannery’s backwards walking \_\_\_\_\_.

Flannery and her father suffered from a disease called \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_.

Because of financial problems during the Great \_\_\_\_\_, Flannery’s

father got a job in \_\_\_\_\_ with the Federal Housing Administration.

3. *Explore!* Click on the images in the “Images of Flannery’s Savannah” section to see a larger version. Think about how the images add to your understanding of Flannery O’Connor’s life.

### A Short Stay in Atlanta

1. *Before you read!* Before you read “A Short Stay in Atlanta,” make a list or write a few sentences to show everything you know about the Great Depression.

**Everything I know about the Great Depression:**

2. *After you read!* After reading “A Short Stay in Atlanta,” fill out the cause and effect chart. Remember, there is not always a clear cause and effect relationship but a good historian makes conclusions based on evidence.

Cause	Effect
	Flannery did not like Atlanta very much.
Stock Market Crash / Great Depression	
	Flannery’s parents enrolled her at Peabody High School in Milledgeville.

3. *Explore!* Watch the two *Today in Georgia History* videos related to Franklin D. Roosevelt and visit the New Deal page on the 1930s Georgia section of the Three Centuries of Georgia History Online Exhibit. After exploring these pages answer the questions below.

- What was Franklin D. Roosevelt’s connection with Georgia? \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_  
 \_\_\_\_\_
- Choose one New Deal program and explain how it impacted Georgia. \_\_\_\_\_

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- 
3. Did Franklin D. Roosevelt’s New Deal programs successfully end the Great Depression?
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Living in the Cline Mansion

1. *Before you read!* Before you read “Living in the Cline Mansion,” make a list or write a few sentences to show everything you know about what it was like for civilians living in the United States during World War II.

**Everything I know about civilian life during World War II:**

2. *While you read!* As you read “Living in the Cline Mansion” make a list of events and facts you think are important to remember about this time period in Flannery’s life.

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

3. *Explore!* Take a close look at the four images of WAVES in the GSCW campus on Georgia’s Virtual Vault. What can you learn about the changing role of women during World War II from these photographs? What additional primary and secondary sources might help you better study the subject?

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Becoming a Writer

1. After you read! After reading each section under “Becoming a Writer,” write a few sentences summarizing the key information from each.

- University of Iowa

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- Yaddo

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- Fitzgeralds

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Flannery's Legacy

1. *After you read!* Flannery O'Connor has influenced a lot of other writers and artists. Who inspires you to be the best at something you are passionate about?

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## 2014 Georgia History Festival Featured Historical Figure Online Resources Flannery O'Connor

### **Brief Biography**

Flannery O'Connor only lived thirty-nine years and published a relatively small body of fiction. Though she penned only two novels and thirty-two short stories, she is considered one of America's most influential fiction writers fifty years after her death.

Mary Flannery O'Connor was born in Savannah on March 25, 1925, to Regina Cline O'Connor and Edward Francis O'Connor, Jr. The O'Connor family settled at 207 Charlton Street just across Lafayette Square from the Cathedral of St. John the Baptist where Flannery was baptized and made her first communion. O'Connor was a devout Roman Catholic throughout her entire life, a fact that deeply influenced her writing.

In 1938, O'Connor moved to her mother's hometown of Milledgeville and enrolled in Peabody High School, where she wrote and drew cartoons for the school newspaper. In 1941, at age fifteen, O'Connor lost her father to lupus erythematosus, the same disease that would later take her life. She attended Georgia State College for Women (now Georgia College & State University), where she served as editor for the school's literary magazine, *the Corinthian*, and contributed cartoons for several campus publications.

O'Connor attended the State University of Iowa (now the University of Iowa) in 1945 on a journalism scholarship. Paul Engle, future head of the famous Iowa Writers' Workshop accepted Flannery into the creative writing master's program. The distinguished writers and lecturers she encountered in the program shaped and guided her literary career. After graduating, O'Connor spent time at the Yaddo artists' colony in New York before moving into the Connecticut home of poet and translator Robert Fitzgerald and wife Sally Fitzgerald. The Fitzgeralds became lifelong friends and supporters of O'Connor's work.

In 1947 O'Connor won the Rinehart-Iowa Fiction award for partial submission of her novel, *Wise Blood*. She would also go on to write a second novel, *The Violent Bear it Away*, and two collections of short stories – *A Good Man is Hard to Find* (1955) and *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, published posthumously in 1965.

O'Connor was diagnosed with lupus in 1951, and she battled the disease until her death in 1964. Despite her debilitating illness, she devoted much of her time to writing, lecturing, and corresponding with fellow authors while living on her family's Milledgeville dairy farm Andalusia. O'Connor's Complete Stories collection was awarded the National Book Award posthumously in 1972. O'Connor is a Georgia Women of Achievement Honoree (1992), charter member of the Georgia Writers Hall of Fame (2000), and the 2014 *Georgia History Festival* Featured Historical Figure.

### **Growing Up In Savannah**

“When I was twelve I made up my mind absolutely that I would not get any older. I don't remember how I meant to stop it.” Flannery O'Connor

Letter to Betty Hester on February 11, 1956. *O'Connor: Collected Works*. Edited by Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Library of America, 1988.

Flannery O'Connor spent the first thirteen years of her life in Savannah. She was born at St. Joseph's Hospital on March 25, 1925 to Regina Cline O'Connor and Edward Francis O'Connor, Jr. Her parents named her in honor of Mary Ellen Flannery a relative on her mother's side of the family. Through her mother, Flannery was connected to two of the most well-known and respected Irish-Catholic families in Georgia, the Cline family and the Flannery family. In fact, one of the buildings at St. Joseph's was named the Flannery Memorial Chapel in honor of Captain John Flannery, one of her relatives.

Flannery's home was a three-story row house at 207 Charlton Street on Lafayette Square. From her parent's upstairs window, Flannery could see the steeple of The Cathedral of St. John the Baptist. Flannery was baptized, confirmed and attended Mass there regularly. Flannery stayed a faithful Catholic her entire life and her novels and stories are famous for their religious themes.

As an only child, Flannery got plenty of attention from her loving parents and many family members in Savannah and Milledgeville. Cousin Katie Semmes moved in next door and provided financial support to Flannery's family. Cousin Katie's father, Captain John Flannery, left almost a million dollars to her when he died in 1910. Family connections helped Flannery's parents get through the financial troubles of the Great Depression.

Flannery had some interesting hobbies and interests growing up. One of her hobbies got the attention of *Pathé News*. Flannery loved birds and had taught one of the bantam chickens raised in her backyard how to walk backwards. A cameraman from the newsreel company shot a few seconds of the bird walking backwards and turned it into a short film. Light-hearted clips like Flannery's backward walking chicken were often played along with the news before a feature film at the movie theater. Visit the [British Pathe website](#) to watch the short yourself.

The future famous author loved reading and writing at a young age. However, Flannery did not enjoy every book she read. In her copy of Lewis Carroll's *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*, Flannery wrote this bad review "Awful, I wouldn't read this book." Flannery liked to write stories about a family of ducks that traveled the world. At the age of ten, Flannery wrote a series of short stories poking fun at her relatives. Her father loved it so much he had it typed and bound.

In 1937, Flannery's father began to get sick. At first doctors thought he had rheumatoid arthritis, but eventually he was diagnosed with lupus erythematosus. As an adult, Flannery suffered from the same disease.

Flannery's time in Savannah came to an end in 1938 when her father got a job in Atlanta as a real estate appraiser for the newly formed Federal Housing Administration (FHA). This was a stressful time for Flannery and her family. Flannery had to move to a new home and start fresh at a new school all while her father's health continued to get worse.

### **Images of Flannery's Savannah**

- Images of the childhood home exterior and interior
- Kiddie koop advertisement
- Images of Desoto pool where she took lessons
- Images of St. John's Cathedral
- Images of the Johnson Square in 1931

## **A Short Stay in Atlanta**

“My idea about Atlanta is get in, get it over with and get out before dark.”

Letter to Dr. T.R. Spivey March 17, 1964. *O'Connor: Collected Works*. Edited by Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Library of America, 1988.

At first, Flannery and her mother lived in Milledgeville in the Cline family's mansion while her father worked on getting them housing in Atlanta. The hardest part of the move to Milledgeville for Flannery was adapting to her new school, Peabody Elementary School. Learn more about Flannery's experiences in school on the School Days page.

Flannery finished the 7th grade at Peabody Elementary School before joining her father in Atlanta where she was enrolled in North Fulton High School. The family lived outside the city in the Peachtree Heights neighborhood of Buckhead. Just like in Savannah and Milledgeville, Flannery was surrounded by aunts, uncles, cousins and other extended family. Flannery and her entire extended family attended Christ the King Cathedral.

Atlanta was hit very hard by the Great Depression. Businesses had to close and many people were unemployed. Flannery's father worked for one of the government agencies President Franklin Roosevelt started in hopes of improving the economy. Flannery did not like Atlanta very much. Maybe she did not like Atlanta because of the economic troubles she saw there as a young woman? Maybe she did not like Atlanta because she had a hard time adjusting to her new school? Maybe she did not like Atlanta because it was the place where she saw her father get sicker and sicker? Whatever the reason, Flannery did not have to stay in Atlanta very long. Her parents saw how unhappy she was and enrolled her at Peabody High School in Milledgeville for next school year.

## **Georgia in the Great Depression**

To really understand what life was like for Flannery O'Connor and her family, you have to understand a little about Georgia during the Great Depression. Use the links below to watch videos, view online exhibits and read articles about Georgia during the Great Depression.

Today in Georgia History Videos

- <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/william-b-hartsfield>
- <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/franklin-d-roosevelt>
- <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/fdr-dies-little-white-house>
- <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/gone-wind-premiere>

1930s Georgia from Online Exhibit Three Centuries of Georgia History:

<http://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/online-exhibits/online-exhibits/three-centuries-of-georgia-history/twentieth-century/1930s/>

## **Living in the Cline Mansion**

“My standard is: When in Rome, do as you done in Milledgeville.” Flannery O'Connor

Letter to Maryat Lee May 19, 1957. *O'Connor: Collected Works*. Edited by Sally Fitzgerald. New York:

Library of America, 1988.

Flannery and her mother moved back to Milledgeville in the fall of 1941. Her father stayed in Atlanta for his job, but his health declined so much that he had to resign his position and move into the Cline Mansion with his family. On February 1, 1941, Flannery's father died at the age of forty-five. Her father's death deeply impacted the fifteen year old. She handled her grief by rarely speaking of her beloved father again.

Flannery lived in the Cline Mansion with her mother and three unmarried aunts while she attended Peabody High School and Georgia State College for Women (now Georgia State College & University). Aunts, uncles, cousins, family friends and honored guests constantly filled the Cline Mansion for Sunday lunches, teas and suppers. Flannery often escaped to the attic for privacy and a chance to draw and write at her tall clerk's desk. From the window, Flannery could observe her pet geese in the backyard. Visit Georgia's Virtual Vault to see an [image of the Cline Mansion](#).

Flannery's mother helped her shy daughter get started with the high school newspaper *Peabody Palladian*. Flannery became the paper's art editor and contributed writings and cartoons for the newspaper. Flannery created hundreds of linocut cartoons in her high school and college days. Want to learn more about linocut and make your own block cartoon? Visit the [Kinder Art site](#) for instructions and a video on linocut.

Flannery continued writing and making cartoons when she started college. By her senior year, Flannery was editor and chief of her school's literary magazine the *Corinthian*, feature editor for the yearbook *Spectrum*, and art director of the school newspaper the *Colonnade*. Flannery dreamed of studying journalism and turning cartoon making into a career.

America entered World War II during Flannery's senior year of high school. News of the war inspired several names for Flannery's pet birds, including a black crow named for Winston Churchill and a rooster named after Adolph Hitler. World War II impacted Flannery's life far beyond the naming of her chickens. GSCW offered a three-year wartime track requiring Flannery to attend summer courses in addition to the usual fall and spring semesters, meaning her college career started just a few weeks after her high school career ended.

The GSCW stayed busy with wartime activities. Organizations like the Red Cross and Civilian Morale Service operated out of buildings on campus with students acting as volunteers. Students did without sugar, gasoline, meat and other products due to rationing. In January 1943, GSCW became home to a unit of the Navy's newly created Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Services or WAVES. The Waves lived in campus dormitories, marched in drills around campus and attended lectures preparing them for duty on naval stations. The WAVES became a regular topic of Flannery's cartoons in the *Palladian*. Want to see a few examples of Flannery's witty cartoons about the WAVES and college life? Visit Fantagraphics Books [preview of Flannery O'Connor: The Cartoons](#).

On May 8, 1945 Victory in Europe day marked the official end of war in Europe. A little over a month later, Flannery graduated from GSCW with a degree in Social Science and a full-ride journalism scholarship to the University of Iowa.

## Georgia and World War II

World War II transformed Georgia. Some 320,000 Georgians served in the U.S. Armed Forces during the war, and tens of thousands of others, including historic numbers of women, served in wartime industries. Every major Georgia city housed a military installation. Follow the links to learn more about the Georgia Flannery experienced during her college years.

More about the Women Accepted for Volunteer Emergency Service (WAVES)

- World War II era WAVES: Overview and Special Image Selection from the Naval History and Heritage Command: <http://www.history.navy.mil/photos/prs-tpic/females/wave-ww2.htm>
- Images of WAVES on the Georgia State College for Women campus from Georgia's Virtual Vault.
  - <http://cdm.georgiaarchives.org:2011/cdm/ref/collection/lball/id/937>
  - <http://cdm.georgiaarchives.org:2011/cdm/ref/collection/lball/id/945>
  - <http://cdm.georgiaarchives.org:2011/cdm/ref/collection/lball/id/940>
  - <http://cdm.georgiaarchives.org:2011/cdm/ref/collection/lball/id/795>

Today in Georgia History

- December 31, 1946 World War II and Georgia <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/world-war-ii-and-georgia>
- December 20, 1994: Carl Vinson <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/carl-vinson>
- April 29, 1950: Dobbins Air Force Base <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/dobbins-air-force-base-dedicated>
- April 8, 1942: German U-Boat Attacks <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/world-war-ii-german-u-boat-attacks>
- March 30, 1942: Bell Bomber Plant <http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/bell-bomber-plant>

World War II from the Online Exhibit Three Centuries in Georgia History:

<http://georgiahistory.com/education-outreach/online-exhibits/online-exhibits/three-centuries-of-georgia-history/twentieth-century/global-conflict/world-war-two/>

### Becoming a Writer

“I am not writing a conventional novel...” Flannery O’Connor

Letter to John Selby, February 18, 1949. *O’Connor: Collected Works*. Edited by Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Library of America, 1988.

### University of Iowa

Flannery arrived in Iowa City, Iowa to begin her graduate studies in journalism at the University of Iowa in September 1945. Iowa City was a small rural town, not unlike what Flannery was used to in Milledgeville, but when school was in session it became bustling with thousands of students and faculty. It was even more bustling in 1945 because the government offered soldiers returning from service in World War II a free college education under the 1944 Servicemen’s Readjustment Act or GI Bill. Creative people especially flocked to the University of Iowa creating a perfect environment for a budding author. Flannery spent her time in Iowa surrounded by aspiring poets, artists, writers and musicians some who had experienced war abroad.

Surrounded by thousands of energetic graduates did not keep Flannery from feeling very homesick. Flannery grew up surrounded by family but now she was with strangers, and it did not help that many of her classmates and professors struggled to understand her southern accent. There was one place Flannery felt at home, St. Mary's Catholic Church.

Unhappy in her journalism and art courses, Flannery changed courses and joined the Writers' Workshop (a name given to the Master of Fine Arts graduate writing program at the University of Iowa). The program's director Paul Engle allowed her into his program after reading some of her writing samples. Other graduate programs in literature focused on reading, analyzing and criticizing the great names in literature like Shakespeare. In the Writers' Workshop, students focused on learning the craft of fiction writing. The students would write short stories before each class and read them aloud to the group. Sometimes Paul Engle would read Flannery's stories because of her thick accent and shy nature. Flannery discovered her career path was not journalism or cartooning but "imaginative writing."

In 1947, Flannery won the Reinhart-Iowa award. To win the award, Flannery submitted several chapters and an outline of what became her first novel *Wise Blood*. Reinhart Publishers awarded Flannery \$750 with an option to publish. In June of 1947 Flannery submitted a collection of short stories titled *The Geranium* as her thesis and was awarded her Master of Fine Arts degree. Flannery continued in Iowa City as a post-graduate and worked on her first novel until the summer of 1948 when she was accepted to the Yaddo Foundation's artists' colony in Saratoga Springs, New York.

### **Yaddo**

Flannery O'Connor went from a small college town in Iowa to rural countryside near New York City to stay at the Yaddo artists' colony. The Yaddo foundation invited artists, writers, composers, philosophers and other creative people to spend time at the Yaddo estate to escape the world and work on their art. All the invited residents got a free place to stay and free meals. Similar to the Iowa Writers' Workshop, the residents at Yaddo shared their work with the group to get ideas and suggestions for revision. Elizabeth Ames was the director of Yaddo when Flannery lived there. She lived in the home and acted like a house mother to the residents.

Ames had strict rules for the residents. From nine in the morning until four in the afternoon no talking was allowed and no visitors. Everyone was expected to work diligently in their studios. Flannery enjoyed the time spent working on her novel, but did not fit in well with the other artists who liked to drink and party in their free time. The poet Robert Lowell arrived at Yaddo in the fall of 1948 and became close friends with Flannery.

In February 1949 an article in the newspaper accused a former Yaddo resident and personal friend of Mrs. Ames of being a Soviet spy. The report was dismissed by the army, but it caused a lot of tension at Yaddo and all the residents left. Around the same time, Flannery received a letter from John Selby from Reinhart publishing with some harsh criticism of the first nine chapters of *Wise Blood*. Flannery explained to Mr. Selby that she was "not writing a conventional novel." Eventually Flannery got a full release from Reinhart and published with Harcourt, Brace & Co.

### **Fitzgeralds**

Flannery lived in New York City before being introduced to Robert and Sally Fitzgerald who invited her to rent a room at their home in Connecticut. Every day, Flannery attended early morning Mass, ate breakfast and then spent four hours working on her novel. In the afternoon she babysat for an hour then

had supper with the Fitzgeralds and spent the evening in lively discussion with Robert and Sally Fitzgerald. On a trip to Milledgeville during Christmas 1949, Flannery fell terribly ill with a kidney condition known as Dietl's crisis. Flannery had surgery and recovered enough to return to the Fitzgeralds in March of 1949. In December of 1950, at the age of twenty five, Flannery started complaining of muscle weakness and joint pains, both symptoms of lupus. Her Christmas visit to Milledgeville that year became a permanent return to Georgia.

### **The Habits of a Successful Writer**

Flannery loved to read and write from a young age. She obviously had naturally talent as a writer, but is that all it takes? Writing is a discipline that takes practice and dedication. While at Iowa State University, Flannery learned the habits and techniques of a successful writer. Perhaps some of the advice Flannery took to heart can help you be a better writer.

1. **Read!** Flannery took several courses that focused simply on reading. She read authors from different time periods, different regions, and different styles. Southern writers like Conrad Aiken and William Faulkner especially influenced Flannery.
2. **Schedule!** One of Flannery's favorite professors Paul Horgan told Flannery she needed to set aside a certain number of hours each day for writing. Every morning after Mass, Flannery would spend around two hours or more writing.
3. **Share!** During the Writers' Workshop, Flannery shared her writing with other students, professors, and other writers brought to the Workshop by Paul Engle. She used the criticism and advice of everyone who read her work to make it better and better.
4. **Keep Trying!** Flannery is now one of the most famous American authors that have ever lived, but she got plenty of rejection notices from magazines and journals. Flannery learned to keep writing and keep trying to get her work published.

### **Life on the Dairy Farm**

"I will be in Milledgeville GA a birdsantuary for a few months, waiting to see how much of an invalid I am going to get to be." Flannery O'Connor

Letter to Betty Boyd Love, December 23, 1950. *O'Connor: Collected Works*. Edited by Sally Fitzgerald. New York: Library of America, 1988.

A doctor in Atlanta diagnosed Flannery with disseminated lupus erythematosus in January 1951, but Flannery's mother kept it a secret from her. Sally Fitzgerald finally told Flannery that she had lupus not arthritis in June 1952 on a visit to Connecticut. Flannery and her mother moved permanently to Andalusia farm. Regina O'Connor, Flannery's mother, managed a successful dairy farm on the property. Flannery's room on the first floor of the main house provided the space she needed to continue her schedule of writing for four hours every morning after attending Mass.

Although Flannery did not plan on moving back to Milledgeville and living with her mother, she made the best of the situation. Flannery got back to her childhood hobby of raising birds. In addition to her old favorites, ducks and chickens, Flannery purchased and raised peacocks. She also started painting in the afternoons after completing her four hours of writing.

Lupus made it difficult for Flannery to lead the independent life she desired, but she did not let it keep

her from leading an active life. Whenever her health allowed, Flannery traveled to visit friends, give lectures, and even make TV appearances. Friends and family frequently visited Andalusia and when she could not visit with people in person, Flannery corresponded with them regularly.

In June 1955, Flannery published *A Good Man is Hard to Find*, a collection of short stories. Many of the short stories were written or rewritten while Flannery lived at Andalusia. The stories included characters inspired by people Flannery came in contact with on the dairy farm or in the surrounding community. In February 1960, Flannery published her second and last novel, *The Violent Bear It Away*. In February 1964, Flannery had surgery to remove a fibroid tumor. The tumor was successfully removed, but surgery reactivated her lupus and caused kidney infections. Flannery continued to work on her last collection of short stories until July when she simply ran out of energy from poor health. On August 2, 1964 Flannery died of kidney failure at the Baldwin County Hospital in Milledgeville. Her last collection of short stories, *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, was published after her death in 1965. Flannery O'Connor is buried at Memorial Hill Cemetery in Milledgeville.

### **Living with Lupus**

Did systemic lupus erythematosus impact Flannery's writing? A *Time* magazine review of Flannery's second novel *The Violent Bear It Away* described Flannery as a shut in suffering from lupus. Flannery was very angry about the review; she did not think it was appropriate for them to make her disease public. The *Time* article gave a wrong impression of Flannery, but was there some truth in it? Did her suffering have something to do with the themes and characters in her novels and short stories? Learn more about lupus before you make your own conclusion.

According to the Lupus Foundation of America, systemic lupus erythematosus or SLE is a chronic, autoimmune disease that can damage any part of the body (skin, joints, and/or organs inside the body). Chronic means that the signs and symptoms tend to last longer than six weeks and often for many years.

To read more about the basics of lupus visit the Lupus Foundation website.

<http://www.lupus.org/answers/entry/what-is-lupus> .

Learn more details about SLE by watching this video presentation from Dr. Robert Valente at the Arthritis Center of Nebraska <http://nebraskaarthritis.com/library/systemic-lupus-erythematosus-video.htm>

For a challenge, read the scholarly article 'Misfit as Metaphor: The Question and the Contradiction of Lupus in Flannery O'Connor's "A Good Man Is Hard to Find"' by Carl S. Horner, PhD. <http://dsq-sds.org/article/view/607/784>

### **Flannery's Legacy**

Fifty years after her death, Georgia native Flannery O'Connor continues to make an impact on the land of the living through the stories she wrote and the story of the life she led. O'Connor's two novels, thirty-two short stories and thirty-nine years on earth continue to influence storytellers in a variety of genres ranging from literary scholars to playwrights to rock stars to late night comedians.

Here is a selection of famous and creative people influenced by Flannery O'Connor

- Truman Capote (author)
- Joyce Carol Oates (author)
- Alice Walker (author and fellow Georgia native)
- Tommy Lee Jones (actor and director)
- Conan O'Brien (comedian)
- Coen brothers (moviemakers)
- Quentin Tarantino (moviemaker)
- Producers of the television show *Lost*
- Bruce Springsteen (singer)
- Bono (singer)

## **Learn More**

### **Read works by Flannery O'Connor**

#### Novels

- *Wise Blood*, 1952
- *The Violent Bear It Away*, 1960

#### Short story collections

- *A Good Man Is Hard to Find*, 1955
- *Everything That Rises Must Converge*, 1965
- *The Complete Stories*, 1971

#### Other works

- *Mystery and Manners: Occasional Prose*, 1969
- *The Habit of Being: Letters of Flannery O'Connor*, 1979
- *The Presence of Grace: and Other Book Reviews*, 1983
- *Flannery O'Connor: Collected Works*, 1988
- *A Prayer Journal*, edited by W. A. Sessions, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 2013

### **Read books about Flannery O'Connor**

- Asals, Frederick. *Flannery O'Connor: The Imagination of Extremity*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2007 (2ed.).
- Feeley, Kathleen. *Flannery O'Connor: Voice of the Peacock*. New York: Fordham University Press, 2010.
- Gooch, Brad. *Flannery: A Life of Flannery O'Connor*. New York: Little, Brown & Co., 2009.
- Gordon, Sarah (et. al.). *A Literary Guide to Flannery O'Connor's Georgia*. Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2008.

### **Online Resources**

- March 25, 1925 *Today in Georgia History*  
<http://www.todayingeorgiahistory.org/content/flannery-oconnor>
- GCSU Russell Library: Flannery O'Connor Collection  
<http://www.gcsu.edu/library/sc/collections/oconnor/bio.htm>
- Andalusia Farm: Home of Flannery O'Connor <http://andalusiafarm.org/home.htm>
- Flannery O'Connor Childhood Home <http://www.flanneryoconnorhome.org/main/Home.html>
- Gordon, Sarah. "Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964)." *New Georgia Encyclopedia*. 21 August 2013.  
<http://www.georgiaencyclopedia.org/articles/arts-culture/flannery-oconnor-1925-1964>

- Georgia Women of Achievement <http://www.georgiawomen.org/2010/10/oconnor-flannery/>
- Georgia Writer's Hall of Fame: <http://www.georgiawritershalloffame.org/honorees/biography.php?authorID=29>
- Southern Literary Trail: Milledgeville <http://www.southernliterarytrail.org/milledgeville.html>
- Southern Literary Trail: Savannah <http://www.southernliterarytrail.org/savannah.html>
- Comforts of Home: The Flannery O'Connor Repository: <http://mediaspecialist.org/>
- Flannery O'Connor episode on PBS Religious and Ethics Newsweekly <http://www.pbs.org/wnet/religionandethics/?p=5043>