

Welcome Readers!

When the time came to work on my second historical novel, I decided to search for a subject within the same type of parameters as I had for *I am Mrs. Jesse James*, hoping to find another woman from Missouri whose experiences were unknown, forgotten, or erased. But I needed a subject who left behind a skeleton of facts rather than a detailed account of every moment of her life, giving me room to flesh out her story in the narrative.

One name jumped right to the top of the list—Rose Cecil O’Neill. I didn’t know much about her, although I’d certainly heard of her most famous creation, the Kewpie doll. As I did a deeper dive into her story, I found there was much more to her accomplishments than the iconic Kewpies. Rose produced a prodigious body of literary and artistic work. However, the areas that interested me most about her were her personal relationships. How did they guide her journey from nineteen-year-old girl to a determined woman of world fame? This seemed the perfect springboard from which to craft a story.

Thank you so much for choosing to read my book. I hope you love Rose as much as I do!

With warmest regards,

Pat



Discussion Questions for *The Rose of Washington Square*

(Printable-with one bonus question!)

1. Before reading the book, had you heard of Rose O'Neill? If so, what did you know about her accomplishments?
2. As the story begins, Rose is a young girl, eager to launch a career for herself. What challenges did she face by leaving her Midwestern family for a life in New York City?
3. What did you learn about the special obstacles facing women during Rose's era? Do you think any of this helped move her into active support of the suffrage movement?
4. Rose had two marriages; both ended by divorce. How would you compare the issues that destroyed each union?
5. One of the themes of this book is the power of persistence in attaining one's goals. Do you see Rose as a never-give-up kind of person?
6. The public's obsession with the Kewpies led to Rose earning a fortune. In what ways did this change her life? Would it change your own life to suddenly become wealthy beyond your dreams?
7. How did you feel about Rose's extremely close bond with her parents and siblings?
8. The Kewpies and the Sweet Monsters were a dichotomy. Why do you think both were important to Rose?
9. In spite of her success, in the final years of her life, Rose became all but destitute. What factors do you believe contributed to the loss of the fortune she had earned?
10. What surprised you most about Rose's story?
11. What do you see as Rose's most important legacy?



O'Neill Family Trivia

(Printable)

1. **William Patrick O'Neill**, patriarch of the O'Neill clan, was an Irish immigrant who loved humor, books, and theatre. Practicality wasn't part of his nature. He led his family from one spot to another (armed with books, Persian rugs, and art objects), always looking for a place where he could be a "gentleman farmer", reading poetry and spinning impossible dreams.
2. **Alice Asenath Smith O'Neill (Meemie)**, met her future husband after he saw her reciting passages from Shakespeare at a public event in Connecticut. He was so taken by her dramatic flair and beauty that he wooed and married her. Alice adored drama and books as much as her new husband and followed where he led with good humor, even adapting to a life where she took on the lion's share of responsibility.
3. **John Hugh O'Neill**, first born of the family, he and Rose (second child of the O'Neills) developed a close bond. He was bright and curious, with ideas that grew into inventions for which he obtained various patents. He is the only one of the O'Neill children to have children of his own.
4. **Mary Ilena "Lee" O'Neill**, the third child of the family, displayed artistic talent from an early age, painting delicate floral designs on teacups. Some say she hoped to emulate Rose's artistic accomplishments, but while she did establish a career as an artist and designer in California, she was unable to achieve the same magic as Rose had done.
5. **James "Jamie" O'Neill**, a bright young man filled with humor and promise, Jamie hoped for a career as an orator or on the stage. Sadly, his life was cut short after he contracted smallpox during his college years.
6. **Callista "Tista" O'Neill**, became Rose's closest companion, confidante, and advisor. She married once and later divorced, but never had children. She cared for Rose and Clink during Rose's final illness. Callista died only two years after Rose.
7. **Edward O'Neill**, lived only two years. Rose was 14 when her younger brother passed away and she describes how she cradled the child's body after he died, as if he were her own.
8. **Clarence "Clink" O'Neill**, was an intelligent yet troubled young man. It's quite possible he was afflicted with some form of Asperger's Syndrome, and while he had great difficulty with social interactions, he had a lively and creative mind. He and Rose were extraordinarily close.