



# Colorado Book Club Resource

## **DISCUSSION QUESTIONS FOR KILLERS OF THE FLOWER MOON : THE OSAGE MURDERS AND THE BIRTH OF THE FBI BY DAVID GRANN**

1. Before starting “Killers of the Flower Moon,” had you ever heard of the Osage murders? If so, how did you learn about it, and what did you know? Do you think this history should be taught in schools?
2. Author David Grann begins the book with a line describing the flowers spread over the Oklahoma hills where the Osage Indian nation resided — and how those flowers break and die in May. How does this line set the tone, and introduce the subject, of the rest of the book?
3. The first character we meet is Mollie Burkhart, whose family becomes a main target of the Osage murders. How does Grann signal to us early on what the murderer may be after?
4. Grann describes the discovery of oil on Osage land as a “cursed blessing.” How do you think it’s a blessing, and how is it a curse?
5. How trustworthy do you find the various authorities who appear throughout the book to investigate the murders? They include William Hale, who Grann initially describes as a “powerful local advocate for law and order,” as well as the frontier lawmen, the brothers who conduct autopsies of the bodies, the local sheriff, and later, the FBI.
6. As you reach the halfway point of the book, who do you believe is responsible for the killings? Why?
7. Osage “headrights” — or the money received by members of the tribe, or by white guardians, from mineral royalties — soon become central to the book. Grann writes: “Although some white guardians and administrators tried to act in the best interests of the tribe, countless others used the system to swindle the very people they were ostensibly protecting.” Which sectors of society abused these guardianships? How was this able to happen?
8. Why do you think the FBI pursued the case of the Osage murders? What did you learn about the birth of the agency?
9. At this point in your reading, what do you think these murders say about America’s history with indigenous people?



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10. As the FBI solved the case, how did J. Edgar Hoover try to shape the mythology of the bureau?  
What parts of the FBI's investigation of the Osage Murders were left out of the story?
11. Grann ends the book with a quote from the Bible about Cain and Abel: "The blood cries out from the ground." Why do you think he chose to close the book this way?

*Discussion questions provided by PBS.org.*



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