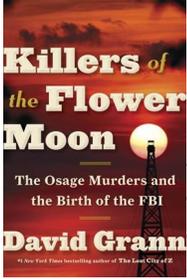


# Books by the Stack



## **Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI by David Grann**

New Yorker staff writer David Grann portrays a series of murders on the reservation. Local authorities couldn't solve the crimes, but an investigation by the relatively new FBI identified and charged the killers, whose primary motivation was greed. Grann also reveals conspiracy and corruption beyond what the FBI discovered.

**Why you'll like it:** *History writing. True crime. Disturbing. Compelling.*

**About the Author:** David Grann is a staff writer at The New Yorker. He graduated from Connecticut College in 1989, and earned a master's degree in international relations from the Fletcher School of Law & Diplomacy and a master's degree from Boston College in creative writing. He has written for The New York Times Magazine, The Atlantic, The Washington Post, The Wall Street Journal, and The New Republic. His stories have been published in numerous anthologies of American writing. His books include *The Devil and Sherlock Holmes*, *The Lost City of Z: A Tale of Deadly Obsession in the Amazon*, and *Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI*. (Bowker Author Biography)

### **Questions for Discussion**

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. Grann begins the book with a line describing the flower 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 murder 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?
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 guardianship? 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. What do you think these murders say about America's history with indigenous people?

- 10.** Grann writes that “history is a merciless judge.” What does he mean by that?
- 11.** 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?
- 12.** How would you describe Tom White? What about how he approached the investigation into the Osage murders? When he solved the crime, were you surprised by the identity of the mastermind? Or had you figured it out along the way?
- 13.** Grann ends with 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?

*(Questions provided by PBS Newshour and LitLovers)*



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