

Warm greetings!

On Thursday evening, November 1st, Book Club members enjoyed an amazing array of treats: pizza, apple tart, assorted crackers and cheese, margaritas, wine, coffee and tea around Laureen's kitchen table to discuss the fascinating David Grann "Killers of the Flower Moon: The Osage Murders and the Birth of the FBI," a true-life "murder mystery about one of the most monstrous crimes in American history."

From the publisher: " In the 1920s, the richest people per capita in the world were members of the Osage Indian Nation in Oklahoma. After oil was discovered beneath their land, the Osage rode in chauffeured automobiles, built mansions, and sent their children to study in Europe. Then, one by one, they began to be killed off. One Osage woman, Mollie Burkhart, watched as her family was murdered. Her older sister was shot. Her mother was then slowly poisoned. And it was just the beginning, as more Osage began to die under mysterious circumstances. In this last remnant of the Wild West—where oilmen like J. P. Getty made their fortunes and where desperadoes such as Al Spencer, "the Phantom Terror," roamed – virtually anyone who dared to investigate the killings were themselves murdered. As the death toll surpassed more than twenty-four Osage, the newly created F.B.I. took up the case, in what became one of the organization's first major homicide investigations. But the bureau was then notoriously corrupt and initially bungled the case. Eventually the young director, J. Edgar Hoover, turned to a former Texas Ranger named Tom White to try to unravel the mystery. White put together an undercover team, including one of the only Native American agents in the bureau. They infiltrated the region, struggling to adopt the latest modern techniques of detection. Together with the Osage they began to expose one of the most sinister conspiracies in American history."

We absolutely loved discussing this book, comparing it to the reading adventure of Erik Larsen's "Devil in the White City," revealing significant facts about a specific time in American History but in a style that reads like a novel. Grann astounded us with gripping and gruesome tales of a serial killer who eliminated a family of the Osage tribe, heirs to wealthy land. Grann documents the family tree going back to the late 1800's, brings us the next generation in the 1920's against the backdrop of Prohibition, the Jazz Age of wealth and fast living, and then introduces us to the grandchildren of the families who are still unraveling the mysterious deaths of over 30 Osage tribe members. Grann unpacks how investigators used forensics to analyze evidence but ultimately struck multiple roadblocks because of the many levels

of corruption which led to the deaths of witnesses and investigators. William Hale, a Whitey Bulgar-like crime boss was instrumental in orchestrating many of the deaths to gain money and power and took advantage of many unsuspecting Osage tribe members who had put their faith in him. He eventually was tried and went to jail thanks to the due diligence of Tom White, a hardworking, old-school detective who receive little credit from Hoover and who eventually became the warden at Leavenworth where Hale was imprisoned after White had him convicted. Grann portrays White favorably and suggests Hoover should have been more indebted to his excellent work. Grann meets the grand daughter of Mollie Burkhart, whose husband was part of the web of corruption, in section 3 during which Grann uncovers more evidence to suggest that the murders probably went on well before and after the time period he investigates in the book.

We unpacked a dozen excellent scenes and talked about so many wonderful topics. Our rating scale is 1-5 with one being "close the door and don't bother me until I am done," 2 being "love this book and you all should read it too," 3 being "glad I read it/borrowed it from the library or a friend but might not suggest that everyone needs to add it to the reading list," 4 being "it was just okay and am so glad I did not buy it or wish I had not bought it," and 5 being "I just wasted hours of my life reading that book???" We all gave this book a 2 with one person given it a 2+!! High scores for our little book group!

Next Book Club: Thursday, Dec. 6th at Lisa's House! Sue Monk Kidd's "The Invention of Wings." From the Publisher:

"Writing at the height of her narrative and imaginative gifts, Sue Monk Kidd presents a masterpiece of hope, daring, the quest for freedom, and the desire to have a voice in the world. Hetty "Handful" Grimke, an urban slave in early nineteenth century Charleston, yearns for life beyond the suffocating walls that enclose her within the wealthy Grimke household. The Grimke's daughter, Sarah, has known from an early age she is meant to do something large in the world, but she is hemmed in by the limits imposed on women. Kidd's sweeping novel is set in motion on Sarah's eleventh birthday, when she is given ownership of ten year old Handful, who is to be her handmaid. We follow their remarkable journeys over the next thirty five years, as both strive for a life of their own, dramatically shaping each other's destinies and forming a complex relationship marked by guilt, defiance, estrangement and the uneasy ways of love."