Killers of the Flower Moon

1. Identity card

Title: *Killers of the Flower Moon*

Director: Martin Scorsese

Date of release: 2023

Genre: Historical crime drama

Historical and Cultural Context: Based on true events and David Grann's nonfiction book, the film is set in 1920s Oklahoma during the Osage oil boom. It exposes the systematic murders of members of the Osage Nation and highlights racism, corruption and the exploitation of Indigenous peoples in the United States.

2. Plot summary

In a nutshell: after returning from the First World War, Ernest Burkhart settles in Oklahoma, where his uncle William Hale encourages him to marry Mollie Kyle, a wealthy Osage woman. As members of Mollie's family die under suspicious circumstances, Ernest becomes caught between his loyalty to his wife and his uncle's criminal scheme. The investigation eventually uncovers a conspiracy driven by greed and racial injustice.

Key Moments:

- ➜ Ernest arrives in Osage County.
- ➜ Ernest marries Mollie.
- ➜ Members of Mollie's family are murdered.
- ➜ The FBI investigates the crimes.
- ➜ William Hale is convicted.

3. Main characters

Name	Role	Symbol
Ernest Burkhart	protagonist	moral conflict, weakness
Mollie Burkhart	Osage woman	resilience, dignity
William Hale	Ernest's uncle	greed, manipulation
Tom White	FBI investigator	justice, truth
Anna Brown	Mollie's sister	innocence, victimhood

4. Major themes and links to the LLCER program

Première – Rencontres

How does the film illustrate this theme?

- ➜ Encounters between different cultures reveal unequal power relationships.
- ➜ Personal relationships are shaped by trust, manipulation and betrayal.
- ➜ Love is tested by prejudice and greed.

Key examples

- ➜ Ernest meeting Mollie.
- ➜ Ernest's relationship with William Hale.
- ➜ The interactions between the Osage Nation and white settlers.

Terminale – Arts and debates of ideas

How does the film illustrate this theme?

- ➜ The film denounces racism, colonial violence and economic exploitation.
- ➜ It questions justice, historical memory and institutional corruption.
- ➜ Cinema gives a voice to a forgotten chapter of American history.

Key examples

- ➜ The murders of the Osage people.
- ➜ The FBI investigation.
- ➜ William Hale's manipulation of those around him.

5. Key quotes and key words

"Can you find the wolves in this picture?"

"This wealth should have brought prosperity, not death."

"History remembers the powerful; art gives a voice to the forgotten."

justice – racism – greed – Indigenous peoples – corruption – memory – exploitation

6. Author's message

- ➜ Greed and prejudice can lead to systemic violence.
- ➜ Historical injustices must be acknowledged and remembered.
- ➜ Justice requires courage and perseverance.
- ➜ Indigenous voices deserve recognition and respect.