

AP Lang
Summer Reading Assignment
In Cold Blood by Truman Capote

All responses should be typed in MLA format (12- point font, double spaced, Times New Roman).

BEFORE READING

1. Look at the title. What does “In Cold Blood” mean? What do you think the book might be about judging from the title? Explain why you think this.
2. Look at the cover picture of the book. Describe in detail what you see on the cover picture. Based on the cover picture, what do you think the book will be about? Explain why you think this.
3. What are your thoughts of the American Dream?
4. How is it important to have a place that you feel safe? 5. Can murder be a necessary evil? Why or why not?

WHILE YOU READ IN COLD BLOOD

The Last to See Them Alive

1. According to the text, what is Mr. Clutter’s only reason for “disquiet” in his life?
2. How do the narrative voice and the sentence structure of the text change when the story shifts from descriptions of the Clutter family to descriptions of Hickock and Perry Smith?
3. How does Perry’s obsession with foreign countries and sunken treasures symbolize his social status as an outcast?
4. What is the biggest challenge to the friendship between Perry Smith and Willie-Jay?
5. How does initial speculation about the murders change the atmosphere within the Holcomb community?

Persons Unknown

1. What aspects of the crime scene as observed by Al Dewey examining photographs foreshadow the eventual capture of the suspects?
2. What does Susan Kidwell find most disturbing about her visit to the funeral parlor? Why?
3. What does Perry’s behavior at the beach and swimming pool reveal about his character?
4. How are the police able to determine the order in which the Clutter family members were murdered?

5. How are Dick and Perry planning to return to the United States? What does their plan reveal about their state of mind following the Clutter murders?

Answer

1. What event in the opening pages of this section turns the investigation around?
2. What does the nickname Perry has given himself reveal about his character and his self image?
3. Why is Perry disturbed by a newspaper account he reads when he and Dick arrive in Miami, Florida?
4. To what extent does Dick's sexuality contribute to his status as a societal outsider? What is Perry's reaction to Dick's sexuality?
5. According to Perry, what is his only regret about the night of the murders?

The Corner

1. What is Mrs. Meier's first impression of Perry Smith?
2. What changes does Perry want to make to his initial statement to police? What is his motivation for making the changes? What does this suggest about his character?
3. What is the symbolic significance of the big yellow bird?
4. Why does Perry go on a hunger strike? Why does he eventually change his mind and end his hunger strike?
5. What does Dick pursue in order to appeal his conviction?

AFTER YOU READ IN COLD BLOOD

Directions: Write a 250-300 word essay on one of the following Free Response Questions. This essay must be typed in MLA format (12-point font, double spaced, Times New Roman). You will need to print and attach to the back of your Summer Reading packet.

Free Response Question #1

The theme of American middle-class is central to Capote's text. Read the passage from the section "The Last to See Them Alive" from Capote's *In Cold Blood*, starting from "The master of River Valley Farm, Herbert William Clutter..." and ends several pages later with "...had small reason to complain." Then, write a well-organized essay in which you analyze how Capote uses the Clutter family to represent the rising middle-class in 1950's America. Be certain to ground all of your assertions firmly in the text. Do not merely summarize the passage.

Free Response Question #2

While attention to character development, narrative structure, and relationships

are essential elements in most works of literary merit, Capote, even more than other writers, tends to value character over other literary elements. Study the passage from the “Persons Unknown” section of the book, starting from “Mountains, Hawks wheeling in a white sky, “ and a few pages later with, “We sure splattered him.” Then, write a coherent, well-written essay in which you analyze how Capote manages to effectively create a complete impression of the character of Perry Smith. Do not merely describe the character or summarize the passage.

Free Response Question #3

Carefully read the passage from “The Corner” section of the book, beginning with “But had Mr. Jones been permitted to discourse,” and ending with, “the amateur analyst reached conclusions not dissimilar.” Then, write a well-organized essay in which you evaluate the effectiveness of Capote’s including the report in his book. Be certain to justify your stance with evidence from the text. Do not merely summarize the plot.