

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote (Published by Vintage International)

Approved for use in Communication Arts IV

Summary

In 1959 in the small rural community of Holcomb, Kansas, four members of the Clutter family are killed in an attempted robbery. Other than the pursuit of ready-cash in the home, there is no apparent motive for the crime. Few clues are left by the killers. In this “true crime novel,” Truman Capote reconstructs the murder and the investigation by the Kansas Bureau of Investigation that eventually leads to the capture, trial, and execution of the killers. The impact on the community is devastating, but the overall impact on the Midwest and the country is enormous.

Connection to the Curriculum

In Cold Blood emphasizes the skillful manipulation of facts to relate a strong story. The book offers the reader an examination of a tragedy through the author’s diligent researching of both the victims and the perpetrators. Because the setting is western Kansas, a unique perspective of life in a very rural town is offered. Capote’s narrative of the way the townspeople live and think provide the reader with a glimpse of how life can change after a tragedy occurs. Critical thinking is promoted throughout the text, especially on topics such as the powerful plea for clemency, the concept of safety through isolation, the closeness of community, the power and tenacity of law enforcement, and the good even in the most evil of men.

Standards

Course Objectives (Benchmarks)

Reading: 1.4- The students comprehend a variety of texts.

Literature: 2.1- The students use literary concepts to interpret and respond to text.

Writing: 3- The students write effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

Possible Skills Taught (Indicators)

Reading:

1.4.7- The student identifies characteristics of narrative, expository, technical, and persuasive texts.

1.4.9- The student uses prior knowledge, content, and text type features to make, revise, and confirm predictions.

1.4.10- The student generates and responds logically to literal, inferential, evaluative, and critical thinking questions before, during, and after reading the text.

1.4.17- The student analyzes and evaluates how an author’s style (word choice, sentence structure) and use of literary devices (foreshadowing, flashback, irony, symbolism, tone, mood, satire, imagery, point of view, allusion, overstatement, paradox) work together to achieve his or her purpose for writing text.

Literature:

2.1.1- The student identifies and describes different types of characters and analyzes the development of characters.

2.1.2- The student analyzes the historical, social, and cultural contextual aspects of the setting and their influence on characters and events in the story or literary text.

2.1.5- The student identifies, analyzes, and evaluates the use of literary devices in a text.

Writing:

3- The student writes effectively for a variety of audiences, purposes, and contexts.

A Note on the Text: (The best way to evaluate and understand a novel is to personally read the book in its entirety.)

This text contains graphic violence in relation to the brutal murders described. It also contains some profanity (including the “n” word). Capote tells the story in a reporter’s style and, therefore, does not spare the reader from the reality or details of the tragedy.

Additional Unit Design Connections

Coming soon