

In Cold Blood
CJS 320: Criminal Law
Professor Zucker Spring 2020

After you finish reading In Cold Blood, answer the following questions. Please be sure you follow the following guidelines: (1) type your responses on 8.5 in. x 11 in. white paper; (2) use normal margins (1 inch on each side); (3) respond to each question using complete sentences and paragraphs.

1. Who is Perry Smith? How was he raised? Should his childhood and young adulthood have anything to do with the sentence he ultimately received?
2. If the Clutter family was not white, do you think Capote would have written this book? Would it have been a best-seller in 1964 when it was published? Why or why not?
3. Capote begins In Cold Blood by giving a detailed description of Holcomb, Kansas. Why? What effect does this have on the reader's view of the story? Why do you think Capote does this? What effect does the crime have on the people of Holcomb?
4. Bobby Rupp is a suspect until he passes a lie detector test. Why? Do some independent research on polygraph and lie detector tests. Do they help guide law enforcement towards solving crimes? Do you believe the results should generally be admissible in criminal trials? Why or why not?
5. Who was Herbert Clutter? If this incident happened to a family of "average" wealth and/or status in Holcomb, do you think this incident would have garnered media attention, much less resulted in a non-fiction novel?
6. Perry discusses finding treasure in the oceans off the Mexican coast. Why does Capote include this information in the book? What does this tell you about Perry? How does this influence your view on whether Perry was deserving of the death penalty?
7. Perry Smith eventually admitted that it was he, alone, who actually committed each of the four Clutter murders. At the trial, the prosecuting attorney told the jurors that "Regardless of who pulled the trigger on Richard [Dick] Eugene Hickock's shotgun, both men are equally guilty." Dick steadfastly maintained that he was less guilty and did not deserve the death penalty because he "never touched a hair on a human head." Using your textbook as a guide, discuss in detail whether Dick's argument is valid or not.
8. "Punishing people is something we not merely do in cold blood, but something that we morally—and almost logically—must do in cold blood." After reading this book, what do you think Capote would say this phrase means?
9. According to Dewey, what is their only physical evidence in the crime? How must the detectives trick Dick and Perry? About what things does Dick boast during his interview? What

impression does he make on the detectives? What story does he tell about the night the Clutters were murdered? How does Dick react when the detectives broach the Clutter murder? According to the detectives, what two mistakes had Perry and Dick made? Before ending the interrogation, what information do the detectives give Dick to think about?

10. Describe how Dick approaches his execution. Describe how Perry approaches his execution. Describe the executioner. Describe the effect the executions have on Dewey. What final information do we learn in the closing scene in the graveyard?