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READ 363/463

8 February 2026

Disecting *In Cold Blood* for High School Classrooms

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote is considered one of the pioneer books of both true crime and nonfiction narratives. I chose this book because I believe that even though it was written in 1966 it still contains elements that keep young readers intrigued and engrossed in the novel. This novel tells the story of the murder of the Clutter family in 1959 Kansas. It dives into the motives that the killers had, the details of the crime, and the fallout for the community. Reading this novel can create discussion surrounding the prison industrial complex in America, the failings of Capitalism, and the influence of crime on community. These are all topics being discussed today, and reading about these issues can aid students in understanding the world before them, as well as the current situations they find themselves in.

The name of the novel is one of the best textual features when it comes to reading this novel. *In Cold Blood* creates the sense of mystery and awe that is to come within the rest of the novel. It draws students in and allows their imaginations to run wild with ideas of what the novel may entail. Another phenomenal literary device within this novel is the foreshadowing that Capote utilizes. In my experience students love the use of foreshadowing, specifically when they are able to correctly infer the outcome. This creates a sense of accomplishment within a student, thus leading to more in depth reading afterwards. Lastly, the lack of chapter names adds to the mystery of the novel. Using only numbers also aids in deepening the understanding that the novel is nonfiction, as well.

There are a few areas within the novel that students may begin to struggle. The first is simply the gruesome details that are included in the novel while covering the events of the murder. This is hard for any reader, but can be especially influential on younger, more inexperienced, readers. Another struggle that students may face would be understanding that

this is a nonfiction novel. Capote does a tremendous job of utilizing narrative techniques to portray the story; however, this can cause some confusion about the genre. Ensuring that students comprehend that this is a nonfiction story can come with some difficulty, but can be overcome by discussions prior and during the reading of the novel. Lastly, there can be some difficulty with the time jumps that occur. Capote utilizes these to push the narrative forward and create the air of mystery. This, however, can cause some confusion for students when it comes to the timeline of the novel. Creating an assignment, such as creating a physical timeline, can aid with this comprehension.