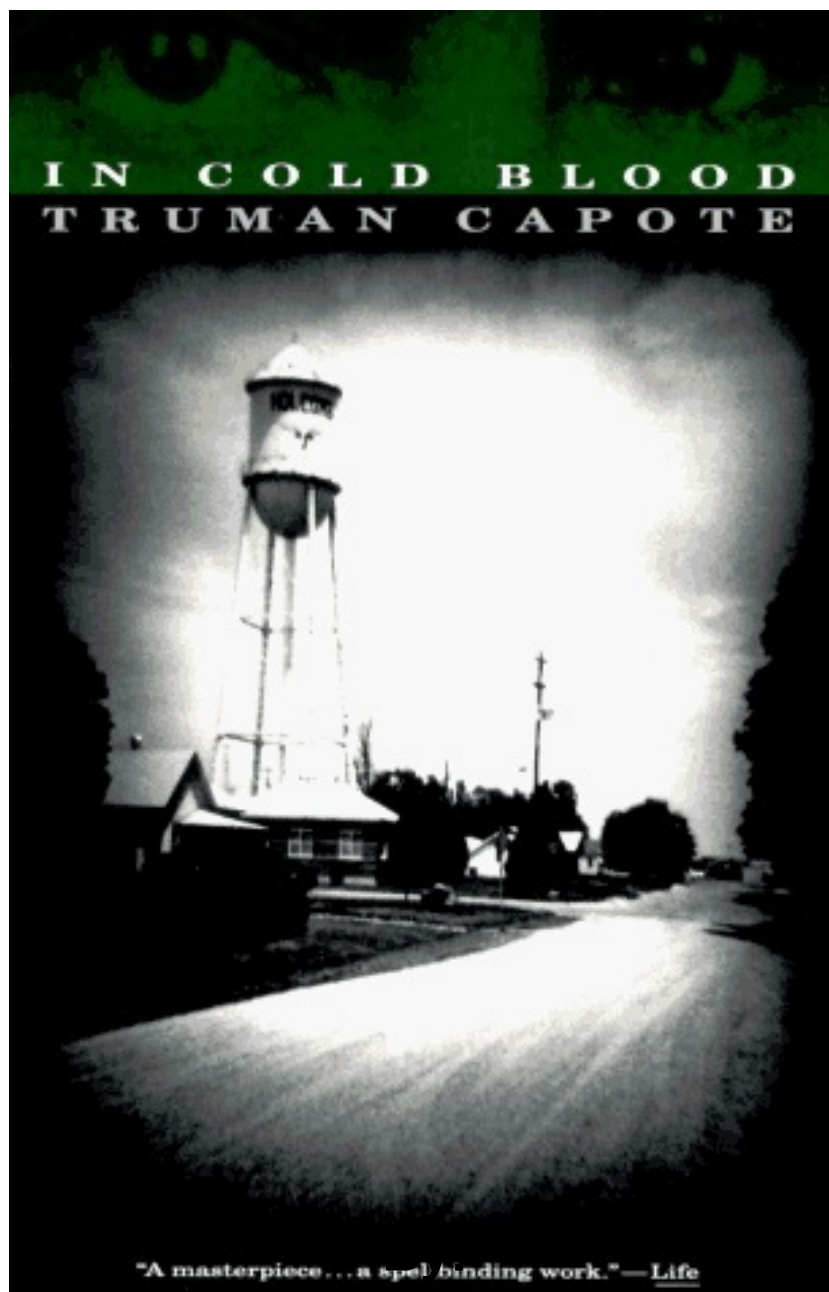


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Truman Capote

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Hickock, Richard Eugene (WM)28 KBI 97 093; FBI 859 273 A. Address: Edgerton, Kansas. Birthdate 6-6-31 Birthplace K.C., Kans. Height: 5-10 Weight: 175 Hair: Blond. Eyes: Blue. Build: Stout. Comp: Ruddy. Occup: Car Painter. Crime: Cheat & Defr. & Bad Checks. Paroled: 8-13-59 By: So. K.C.K.

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Smith, Perry Edward (WM) 27-59. Birthplace: Nevada. Height: 5-4. Weight: 156 Hair: D. Brn. Crime: B&E. Arrested: (blank) By: (blank). Disposition: Sent KSP 3-13-56 from Phillips Co. 5-10yrs. Rec. 3-14-56. Paroled: 7-6-59.

As I write this review, I'm sitting about 60 miles from the Clutter house in Holcomb, Kansas. Holcomb is a small, farming community located just west of Garden City. This is a place where everyone in the whole county not only knows your name, but also has a working knowledge of your family history going back fifty plus years.

I usually avoid reading true crime books. I don't want my head filled with tragedy. I want to go about my life with a degree of caution, but not be ruled by the fear I feel such books will instill.

I picked up a copy of this book at the Dodge City Library. The librarian at the check out desk, a woman about mid-sixties, slender, elegant, and still attractive ran her finger along the edge of the spine. I noticed a shiver had rolled up her back and rippled her shoulders. She looked up at me with pinched blue eyes and said in a whisper,

She watched her father put locks on the doors for the first time. The murders became a demarcation line in her life there was life before the Clutter murders, and then there was life after the Clutter murders. Her response surprised me. We live in a time when any crime anywhere in the country is broadcast out to the nation and something tragic that happens in Illinois or in Virginia or Alaska impacts our lives. I would have thought over time some of the significance of the Clutter murder would have been buried under the avalanche of murder and mayhem that the news cycle brings us 24/7. For this community and for all the small communities dotting the map of Kansas, and even in

the surrounding states, this was something that wasn't supposed to happen in a small town. This was big city crime that happened in their own backyard.

As I talked to people about the Clutter murders most everybody had some kind of physical reaction. They flinched as if they were dodging a blow or took a step back from me or developed a twitch along their jawline. Their eyes gazed through me or beyond me as the fears and anxieties of 1959 came flooding back into their mind. Most of them attributed more deaths to the crime, each of them citing six deaths rather than four. I'm sure they remembered that there was six family members, but two older girls had already left the home to start their own lives. They were not present on that fateful night when their family was murdered.

Michael Finocchiaro

I just wonder why it took me so long to get this masterpiece on my currently-reading shelf. What a breathtaking story! And told in the most amazing novelistic style! The cold-blooded murders in Kansas in 1956 is described by a cold, distant narrator via the interviews of the family, acquaintances, and community around the victims and the hair-raising stories of Perry and Bobby, the murderers. It is a real page-turner - I couldn't put it down! The descriptions of the youth of all the tragic prota

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This book is a true masterpiece of the non-fiction novel (even if some of the facts brought out by Capote were disputed) and its narration is stupendous in character development and maintaining an enormous amount of suspense end-to-end. It is even more astounding because the reader already knows who commits the crime, the novel only elucidates the "why" and even that is ambiguous and pathetic. An awesome read.

Note that in A Capote Reader, there is a great short essay about the making of the movie In Cold

Blood where Capote talks a bit about the 6 years it took him to write this masterpiece. (Haven't seen the movie yet :/)

[UPDATE] I finally saw the movie Capote and it was absolutely amazing as a backstory to this book. I still haven't found the movie In Cold Blood yet.

Will Byrnes

- image from the NY Post

This is one of the great ones. Capote blankets Holcomb, Kansas with his curiosity. The root of this work is a ghastly crime. Two recently released convicts, seeking a fortune that did not exist, invade the Clutter family home, tie up the four family members present and leave no witnesses. It takes some time for the perpetrators to be identified, then tracked down. Capote looks at how the townspeople react to this. Many, fearful that one of their own was res

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This is truly a classic, a book that defined a new genre of literature. If you haven't read it, you must.

- image from ABC Australia

In case you are in the market and in the neighborhood, this 10/24/19 item from SF Gate by Clare Trapasso, might be of interest -

megs_bookrack

This should be on everyone's

As many of you may know,

is a true account of the heinous murders of the Clutter Family in 1959 Kansas.

In my opinion, the writing style of this account is absolutely flawless.

Through Capote's words, you are transported to this small town; you get alternating accounts from the family, from the killers, from other residents close to the crime.

T

This should be on everyone's

Brina

In Cold Blood is the new school classics selection in the group catching up on classics for November 2016. Having read Truman Capote's Breakfast at Tiffany's recently and enjoying his writing, I could not wait to read this nonfiction thriller in advance of the upcoming group read. Writing in his relaxing southern style, Capote turns a horrid crime into a story to make the how's and whys accessible to the average American. It is in this regard that I rate this thrilling classic five stars.

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On November 15, 1959 Richard "Dick" Hickock and Perry Smith, on a tip from another inmate, brutally murdered four members of the Clutter family of Holcomb, Kansas. Having heard that the Clutters possessed either a safe or \$10,000 cash in their home, Smith and Hickock desired this wealth for themselves so that they could live out their days in a Mexican beach resort. To their surprise and chagrin, the Clutters did not have neither the safe nor the cash, but Hickock had said to leave no witnesses. Crime committed, the pair escaped to a life of continued crimes and violence and believing that authorities would never catch up with them. And in the beginning it appeared that this ill advised lifestyle might actually work.

Due to the relentless work of the Kansas Bureau of Investigations (KBI) lead by Alvin Dewey, Hickock and Smith were eventually brought to justice and ultimately given the death penalty. Capote weaves a tale by giving us the backstory of both felons as well as a picture of Holcomb and nearby Garden City, Kansas as an idyllic place to raise a family. The crime changed everything. Families kept their doors locked and did not allow their children to venture far from home. In the surrounding areas, people viewed their lives as a before and after. Inevitably, the Clutter case lead to less community interaction and a beginning of a breakdown of society.

Yet by providing the backstories of the felons, Capote allows the the readers to emphasize with their place in society. Dick Hickock was on his way to finishing at the top of his class with a possible athletic scholarship and a degree in engineering. His family could not afford a university education even with the scholarship so Hickock went to work. An automobile accident left him partially brain damaged as his parents maintained that he was not the same person since, and this one incident lead to his adult life of crime. Smith, on the other hand, lead a bleak childhood to the point where readers would feel sorry for him. Coming from a fractured family and only a third grade education, Smith suffered from a superiority complex his entire life. His role in the Clutter murders was the consummation of a lifetime of rejection. The felons came from diametrically opposed upbringings and yet I was left feeling remorse for both.

Capote pieced together the crime to the point where I felt that I knew the people of Holcomb as well as the principal players in the crime intimately. This work lead to a new genre that brings together

nonfiction and fiction in a way that history feels like a story. Both Capote and his research assistant Harper Lee ended up as award winning authors. Their fictional writing skills allowed for the personalization of this tale and ultimately help change the way many write nonfiction.

Truman Capote is one of 20th America's master storytellers, and In Cold Blood is by many considered his opus. His research was detail oriented and allowed him to bring the story of the Clutter murders to the average American home. After completing this five star work painting the picture of the how's and whys of murder, I look forward to reading more of his charming Southern stories.