

Approved for use in Grade 12

Summary:

In Cold Blood by Truman Capote is a true-crime novel that delves into the brutal 1959 murder of the Clutter family in rural Kansas. The book combines detailed investigative journalism with a literary narrative to explore the lives of the victims and the perpetrators, Richard Hickock and Perry Smith. Capote examines the psychological and social factors behind the crime, offering a profound and unsettling look at human nature and the American justice system. The novel is renowned for its rich, empathetic portrayal of both the victims and the criminals, blending fact and narrative in a way that has left a lasting impact on the genre.

Rationale:

In Cold Blood should be taught in 12th grade because it offers a compelling exploration of human psychology, morality, and the complexities of the criminal justice system. Its narrative style blends literary artistry with factual reporting, providing students with an opportunity to analyze both journalistic and narrative techniques. Additionally, the novel encourages critical thinking about societal issues, such as the nature of crime and punishment, and fosters discussions on empathy and ethical dilemmas. Its impact on the true-crime genre and its relevance to contemporary debates make it a valuable text for developing analytical and ethical reasoning skills in students.

Professional Reviews and/or Critical Essays:

- Resources are available from the library media center and libraries in the district. Contact any Teacher-Librarian to view the scholarly sources.
- Scholarly reviews are also available online. Contact the Teacher-Librarian for guidance.

GARRETT, GEORGE. "THEN AND NOW: 'IN COLD BLOOD' REVISITED." *The Virginia Quarterly Review*, vol. 72, no. 3, 1996, pp. 467–74. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/26438775>.

J. Madison Davis. "Recognizing the Art of Nonfiction: Literary Excellence in True Crime." *World Literature Today*, vol. 86, no. 5, 2012, pp. 10–12. JSTOR, <https://doi.org/10.7588/worllitetoda.86.5.0010>.

Tangedal, Ross K. *The Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association*, vol. 45, no. 2, 2012, pp. 259–62. JSTOR, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/43150857>.

Notes on the Text:

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

-There are only two public challenges to the novel, Georgia (2000) and California (2012). Complaints included concerns about violence, profanity, and sex. In both instances the challenges were not upheld and the novel remained on approved book lists.

Noted Distinction:

Edgar Award for Best Fact Crime- 1966
2nd Best-selling true crime novel in history

Readability

- Lexile Score: 1040
- Readability Level: 8 on the Flesch-Kincaid scale

Learning Resources Guidelines

- The film meets the [Learning Resources Guidelines](#) and [Board Policy](#).

Approval:

Submitted to Committee: [September 2024]

Approved for Adoption:

Connection to the Curriculum:

Standard Alignment: *(Type which standard number then link to specific standard document on OPI website.)*

[RL.11-12.2](#)

[RL.11-12.3](#)

[RL.11-12.4](#)

[RL.11-12.10](#)

Additional Connections:

(AP, Honors, Essential/Applied, Dramas, Films, etc.)

This novel may also be suitable for an AP literature class, in addition to an American Literature course.