

In Cold Blood

Truman Capote

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Truman Capote was a powerful writer, this one non-fiction book took him 6 years to complete. His detailing the murder of the Clutter family and the two men who carried it out, almost getting away with it, was gripping to say the least. The emotions that he put on the pages has made this one of the only books that I have read more than once. Each time being more enjoyable the last. The way that Mr. Capote befriends one of the men that committed the crime; and through his writing you start to feel empathy for him. I almost forgot that he was a murderer.

Holcomb Kansas, November 1959 the Clutter family was brutally murdered. Herbert the husband, Bonnie the wife and their two children Nancy and Kenyon. Leaving behind two older daughters who did not live at home. Mr. Capote read about the crime in The New York Times and it intrigued him to go Kansas to start his research. It was not until after the men were caught that he was able to fill in the blanks, writing this amazing novel. The two men involved, Dick Hickock and Perry Smith had been in jail and was told that Mr. Clutter (Herbert) was a wealthy man; his money being kept in a safe. After being released from jail, Dick and Perry made plans for the robbery. When they arrived at the Clutter home, they found that there was no money, no safe. The two bound and shot the family for \$50, walked out leaving no real evidence behind. After the two were finally identified by a witness due to a few items that they had taken from the Clutter household, they were arrested. They both confessed and were placed on death row. This is where Perry became my main interest.

The way that Mr. Capote wrote this novel was what drew me to read it numerous times. It was oddly compassionate towards the murders. Perry Smith being his love interest is how I perceived it. He found both Perry and Dick legal representation, putting off their death sentences for quite some time. That showed Perry how he felt about him helping to gain his trust. It also gave him the time he needed to write

this novel in the manner of which he did. He made me feel sorry for Perry. Telling me about his life, his relationship or lack of, with his father. I remember Perry describing how his father would not let him go to school because he did not want him to learn. His father never giving him the opportunity to do better for himself. Capote writing with emotion to keep the human fact above the thought of him being a murderer. The story he told of his mother and how she left his father with him and his siblings. Then later committing suicide and Perry being put in an orphanage. How could the reader not feel empathy for him? Making you wonder if he had had a better life, would he have made better choices?

Mrs. Meier playing the radio in her kitchen and I heard a man say the county attorney will seek the Death Penalty. “The rich never hang. Only the poor and the friendless.” (pg. 257)

This struck me for many reasons. Mostly empathy for Perry when I should have had nothing but contempt for him. But Capote wrote with feelings that drew me in this direction, I wonder how others that read this novel reacted to its contents? I cannot be the only reader that felt that way.

In Part Two for the novel, there is a paragraph that describes the funeral of the Clutters. It reads more like a part of the social highlights section in the newspaper than a family that had been murdered.

Nancy wore a dress of cherry-red velvet, her brother a bright plaid shirt; the parents were more sedately attired, Mr. Clutter in a navy-blue flannel, his wife in a navy-blue crepe; and---and it was this, especially, that lent the scene an awful aura—the head of each was completely encased in cotton, a swollen cocoon twice the size of a blown-up balloon, the cotton, because it had been sprayed with a glossy substance, twinkled like Christmas snow. (pg. 95)

I have only read one other of Capotes books, *Breakfast at Tiffany's*. I was not a fan to be honest. *Cold Blood* was his only non-fiction and I wish that he had had a chance to write more. After he finished this book, Mr. Capote started to drink heavily and turned to drug use. A *New York Time's* obituary dated August 26, 1984 reports; Truman Capote Is Dead at 59; Novelist of Style and Clarity.

