“…the most perfect writer of my generation.”

~Norman Mailer, American author and director
In Cold Blood

By Truman Capote
Capote’s Childhood

- Truman Streckfus Persons born 1924 in Louisiana.
- Raised in Monroeville, AL by relatives, where he met Harper Lee, author of *To Kill a Mockingbird* helped Capote research *In Cold Blood*.
- When his mom remarried, he moved with her to NY and was adopted by her husband, Joe Capote.
Capote’s Experience

- Attended the best schools, tested at high IQ, but got low grades.
- Rumored to be “Dill” in his best friend’s Pulitzer Prizewinning novel.
- At 17, got office assistant job for New Yorker magazine.
- Developed relationship with them, and they first published In Cold Blood in parts in their magazine.
- Also authored Other Voices, Other Rooms and Breakfast at Tiffany’s: A Short Novel and Three Stories
Capote’s Reputation

- He was an individual: openly homosexual, the highlight of New York society, famous and popular.
- He was sensitive, and researching *In Cold Blood* troubled him deeply. He became addicted to alcohol and drugs and died at age 59.
- He left most of his wealth to his long-time lover, Jack Dunphy.
In Cold Blood Background

• Like Crime and Punishment, the book was originally published in parts for a magazine.

• Unlike Crime and Punishment, it is based on the true story of the murders of four members of the Clutter family in Kansas in 1959.
The political focus at the time was on foreign invasion, but this event was American. It shocked the nation and created widespread fear.
Evolution of the American Household

American Life

If your husband ever finds out
you're not "store-bought" for Frischer coffee...

NOW SHE CAN COOK BREAKFAST AGAIN

The Chef does everything but cook - that's what wives are for!

SO THE HARDER THE OUTSIDE WORKS,
SHE LOOKS BETTER!
WORLD'S HIGHEST STANDARD OF LIVING

There's no way like the American Way
Capote created a new genre with this book: the nonfiction novel.

Capote saw journalism getting stale. He wanted to bring it back to life.

He combined journalism and fiction to report the facts using actual court documents and artifacts, and studied those involved to characterize them as people.
The “Non-Fiction Novel”?  

- Celebrity author believes he has invented a new genre, “faction”  
- **Genre:** French for form, literary type  
- Use of quotation marks (“Out there” and (“pronounced ‘Arkan-sas’ River”) denotes outsider perspective  
- Is the reporting objective or partial?

Outside looking *in cold blood*…

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*too brief a treat*

THE LETTERS OF TRUMAN CAPOTE

EDITED BY GERALD CLARKE AUTHOR OF CAPOTE: A BIOGRAPHY
“The village of Holcomb stands on the high wheat plains of western Kansas, a lonesome area that other Kansans call “out there.” …Like the waters of the river, like the motorists on the highway, and like the yellow trains streaking down the Santa Fe tracks, drama, in the shape of exceptional happenings, had never stopped there.”

~Truman Capote - *In Cold Blood*
Themes

- Nature vs. Nurture
- Retribution & Revenge
- Sexuality
- Fate
- Loss of Innocence/
  Destruction of the American Dream
What to annotate for...

- Ethos
- Pathos
- Logos
- Claim
- Counter claim
- Rhetorical question
- Tone
- DIDtLS (*especially imagery)
- Foreshadowing
- Symbolism
“At the time, not a soul in sleeping Holcomb heard them—four shotgun blasts that, all told, ended six human lives. But afterward the townspeople, theretofore sufficiently unfearful of each other to seldom trouble to lock their doors, found fantasy re-creating them over and again—those somber explosions that stimulated fires of mistrust, in the glare of which many old neighbors viewed each other strangely, and as strangers.”

~ Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*
“Mrs. Clare’s notions conformed with those of very few. ‘Around here,’ according to the proprietor of one Garden City hardware store, ‘locks and bolts are the fastest-going items. Folks ain’t particular what brand they buy; they just want them to hold.’ Imagination, of course, can open any door – turn the key and let the terror walk right in.” ~Truman Capote, *In Cold Blood*