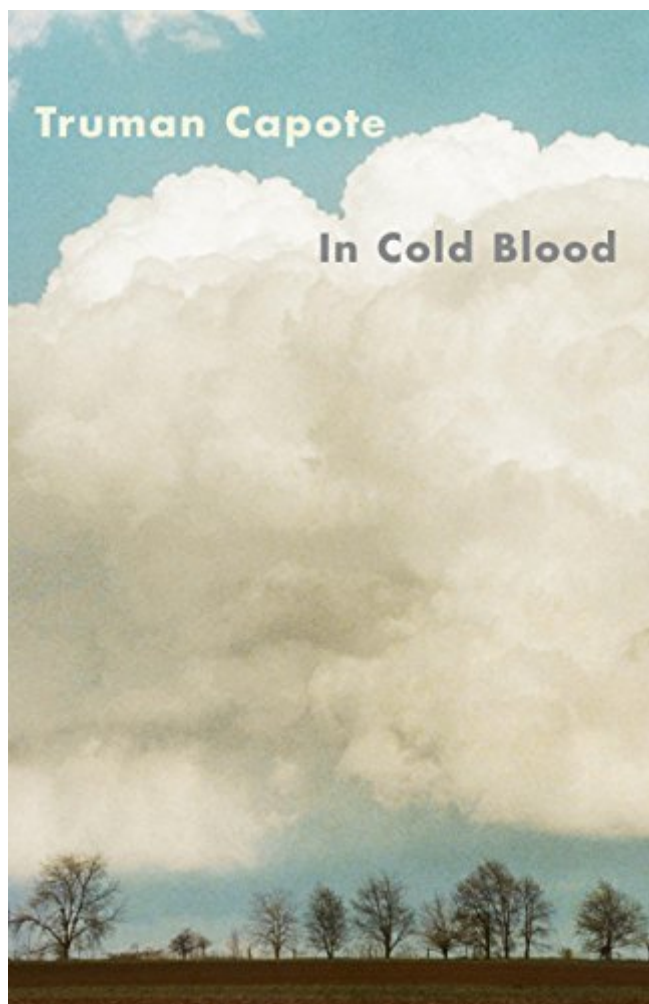


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# In Cold Blood (Vintage International)



## Synopsis

National Bestseller— On November 15, 1959, in the small town of Holcomb, Kansas, four members of the Clutter family were savagely murdered by blasts from a shotgun held a few inches from their faces. There was no apparent motive for the crime, and there were almost no clues. As Truman Capote reconstructs the murder and the investigation that led to the capture, trial, and execution of the killers, he generates both mesmerizing suspense and astonishing empathy. In *Cold Blood* is a work that transcends its moment, yielding poignant insights into the nature of American violence.

## Book Information

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## Customer Reviews

On November 15, 1959, in Holcomb, Kansas, the four members of the Clutter family were dragged from their beds in the early hours of the morning and tied up. All four were shot in the head with a shotgun at close range. None survived. The killers left few clues, and there was no apparent motive for the slayings. On assignment from the *New Yorker*, author Truman Capote, along with his assistant Nell Harper Lee, traveled to Holcomb in late 1959 to investigate the killings for an article. The article was completed, but still Capote remained in Holcomb. He conducted interviews with

every person in town; he pored over police records and statements. Once the killers, drifters Perry Smith and Dick Hickock, were caught and sentenced, he even interviewed them on Death Row. The Clutter killings became an obsession for him; and that obsession turned into a book that would become a literary milestone, that would singlehandedly introduce a new genre to the literary world: the nonfiction novel. He called his piece of creative nonfiction *IN COLD BLOOD*, and it so consumed him that it would be the last thing he'd ever write. I didn't expect this book to move me so deeply. In most true crime books that are written today (at least in my experience), the evidence is presented straightforwardly, unemotionally; the facts are dry and textbook-like. Such is not the case with *IN COLD BLOOD*. Capote's prose is mesmerizing. His descriptions of Holcomb and its inhabitants are vivid and lively. His research is impeccable, presented flawlessly, lushly, sweeping the reader away on waves of vibrant language.

**\*\* PRODUCT UPDATE \*\*** In early 2013 the Modern Library (a division of Random House) reissued four Capote works: a new *PORTRAITS AND OBSERVATIONS*, a combined *OTHER VOICES*, *OTHER ROOMS* and *BREAKFAST AT TIFFANY'S*, the collected *SHORT STORIES* and this one -- *IN COLD BLOOD*. Dust jackets are in harmonizing colors and common typography (see product photos); the books themselves are hardbound, in classic ML beige. A good price, too. Of course, *IN COLD BLOOD* is still available in paperback, too, as it has been ever since the mid-1960s. The magnificence of "In Cold Blood" doesn't lie in the subject matter but in its treatment. There are--unfortunately--more depraved criminals and more elaborate police investigations detailed in a great many "true crime" accounts. But I doubt that any of them is as well written as "In Cold Blood." I haul my copy out every 2-3 years just to remind myself how wonderful the rhythms and nuances of the American language can be at the hands of a master. I am totally drawn into the lives of the prosperous and completely unsuspecting Clutter family of western Kansas and the two drifters, Perry and Dick, who by themselves didn't amount to much but together proved lethal that fall night in 1959. A trivia note: Capote's research assistant on this book was Nell Harper Lee, who shortly after would become famous as the author of "To Kill a Mockingbird." I'd recommend Gerald Clarke's excellent biography "Capote" to learn about this one-of-a-kind book, its creation, reception, and how it affected the author's life. **PRODUCT UPDATE (2012):** The hardcover edition of *IN COLD BLOOD* with a photograph of the Clutter house on the cover is a quality edition issued by the Folio Society of Great Britain.

I have meant to read this book for some time. I'm a little embarrassed to admit that seeing the

Capote film is what finally induced me to read it, but I suppose that must be true. I had seen the film the previous weekend, bought this book during the following week, and just this past weekend, devoured it in all of two days. Capote's masterpiece tells the story of the senseless, brutal killing of a rural Kansas family in 1959. It is beautifully written from start to finish -- in an understated way. If you come into this experience, as I did, conscious of the narcissism of the author, you might be surprised at the writing style. It is very humble, no Joycean or Nabokovian literary showing off. The story is paramount; the author does an amazing job of staying invisible, and respecting that story. Respect is the feeling that is conveyed throughout the book. The telling is very respectful of the Clutter family; you learn of what remarkable people they were, even as they met their ends. The author is also fundamentally respectful of the people of the town, and of the local law enforcement. The book is not without its implied questioning of the judicial process, but again, I greatly appreciated the empathy and respect that pervaded the book. This fundamental respect for human dignity even, in a more disturbing way, pervades even the discussion of the lives of the killers. The author candidly relates the biographies of these two men. On one level, this conveys an understanding of how they came to be what they were, but on a deeper level, it's all still a mystery. Left unanswered, still, is what really causes a man to be a killer.

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