In Cold Blood

Photos: text, Truman Capote, Dick Hickock, and Perry Smith

Purpose

You will write an essay surrounding Truman Capote’s use of language in the novel *In Cold Blood*, using a thesis of your own creation, based on the reading and synthesis of several sources. Your argument will be supported by a variety of given sources; it should go without saying that appropriate citations, works cited, and formal essay structure, diction, and tone are a must.

The assignment is similar to the research papers you have done in the past, and will mirror, on a larger scale, the synthesis prompts given on the AP exam for English Language. This will test your ability to formulate a position based on your critical and analytical reading of sources and convey that in a clear and cohesive written format. Steer clear of simple plot summary; this is not your 3rd grade book report. A well-crafted essay will develop an argument, support that argument with the provided sources, and blend the proper balance of your written voice and command of the language with the academic formality which a research paper requires. This essay will serve as your first major grade, and is due upon crossing the threshold on the first day of class.
Background

The sources you will read will revolve around the novel, *In Cold Blood*; the film *Capote*; the life of the author, Truman Capote; the life of the murderers, Dick Hickock and Perry Smith; the city of Holcomb, Kansas; and the aftermath of the quadruple homicide. Author Truman Capote spent six years writing about the crime and the complicated psychological story of the killers, eventually writing the first, and arguably the best, creative nonfiction novel of all time, *In Cold Blood*, published in 1966. The film, *Capote*, focuses on Capote's research of the murder, his writing of the novel, and the relationship which Capote built with Perry Smith, one of the convicted murderers, before his execution.

Possible Positions

There are myriad possible positions regarding language which you might consider for this paper:

- Historical
- Biographical (of the author Capote, of the killers, the victims, etc.)
- Thematic (trust, small town community, etc.)
- The judicial process
- Psychological
- Creative nonfiction as a genre
- Your choice…
Sources

Choose at least five (5) of the sources below to read or watch to synthesize and support your own argument. The sources with an asterisk* must be used.

*In Cold Blood, the novel

*Capote, the film (2005, starring Philip Seymour Hoffman, directed by Bennett Miller)

In Cold Blood the film (1967, starring Robert Blake, directed by Richard Brooks)

Two biographies have been provided; you may deviate from these two sources if you find alternative biographies.

Reed, Kenneth Truman Capote (1981) (813.54/Cap-HEHS Media Center call number)

Garson, Helen Truman Capote (1980) (813.54/Cap-HEHS Media Center call number)

Links to the articles have been provided.

“A Nightmare Lived Again” Life (1967)

(Located on the AP Lang and Comp ’10-’11 wiki)


http://www.jstor.org/stable/3831294

“City of Holcomb, Kansas”

Guinn, Jeff. “Glamorizing a mass murderer or shedding light on an ugly side of life?” Fort Worth Star (2001)

“`In Cold Blood’ A legacy in photos”


**Additional, not alternate, sources may be used with teacher approval.**

***To connect to the EBSCO or JStor links, you must first be logged into Hoffman Estates High School’s databases. Through the HEHS Media Center homepage, in the right hand column click the offsite database link, enter your ID number and your last name in all caps, then open JStor or EBSCO links.***

**Assignment Details**

- 5 to 7 pages typed, double-spaced, 12 point readable font
- Usage of at least 5 of the given sources, which must include the two required sources
- Links to articles have been provided. Movies and copies of books must be acquired on your own. Check libraries, Netflix, and Blockbuster; Amazon always sells cheaper used copies.
- Works cited page, following MLA guidelines
- Annotate your text and source materials and be prepared to read, discuss, and continue working with these notes and sources.
- 200 points
- **Due date: First day of class. NO LATE PAPERS WILL BE ACCEPTED.**
- **Assessment Criteria**
  - Clarity of writing
  - Technical accuracy of writing
  - Depth of analysis
  - Seamless synthesis of sources
MLA Citations

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/resource/557/01/

*This is your first major grade of the course and will set the tone for the entire school year. You wouldn’t want to “start off on the wrong foot,” quoting Scout from Harper Lee’s novel, To Kill a Mockingbird. This reference is much more significant than it may appear now…

First Semester Texts

These texts must be purchased for use during the first semester.

The Stranger by Albert Camus


Second Semester Texts

This text must be purchased for use during the second semester.


Contact Information

We are all excited about the upcoming school year, and we hope you are as well! Your abilities to communicate with the your learning community – teachers included – is an important skill, please do not hesitate to contact one or all of us if you have questions or concerns about the assignment or the course.

Mr. Mark Ahn mahn@d211.org

Mr. Ryan Brown rbrown@d211.org
Addtionally, we would like all of you to join the wiki which has been created for the AP Lang and Comp '11-'12 learning community.

If you are not already a member of wetpaint.com, you will need to create a free username. Once you have a username, you can join our learning community at: www.aplangandcomp11-12/wetpaint.com

Use this site to communicate with the entire learning community: teachers and students. Further instructions are listed on the site homepage. This open forum will be an invaluable educational tool in the upcoming year; use this summer to make yourself familiar and comfortable with the format.