

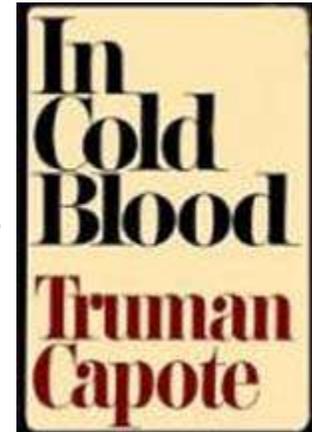
Review of *In Cold Blood*

In Cold Blood
by Truman Capote

Reviewed by Elaine Scheuerman, Deputy Director, Finney County Public Library

“Official Detective Stories,” “Front Page Detective,” and “Police Gazette” -- these were true crime magazines that were on newsstands in 1960. About the only thing you won’t be able to find on a newsstand today is a copy of what you might call pulp fact. I was aware of these magazines because some of them were in the household where I grew up in Pennsylvania.

The sideline on the front cover of “Front Page Detective,” April 1960, blared in red, “Garden City, Kan. Massacre of the Clutter Family.” On page twenty-two, the article written by Nathaniel Pennypacker was afforded eight pages with photos of the family members. Their pet dog also had a photo with a caption that read, “Their pet, gun shy and bewildered.”



In “Official Detective Stories,” April 1960, the headline on the front cover was “Kansas’ Latest Sensation: Who Killed the Four Clutters?” The article on page twenty-eight, written by E.J. Hayes, Special Investigator for Official Detective Stories, was given five pages with photos.

You are probably wondering how I can be so sure about these two pulp magazines. That’s because they are in residence, in our “Clutter File,” at Finney County Public Library in Garden City, Kansas, about seven miles from Holcomb where the Clutter family lived. The library has many such original materials from that time period because so many librarians have that unique talent of knowing what materials need to be preserved for future reference.

In Cold Blood and Truman Capote have a relationship that will live forever. It was his crowning achievement in literature. He took a crime that was committed in a small town and created the first non-fiction novel that put you right there in Holcomb, Kansas.

On November 16, 1959, Sunday morning, sixteen-year-old Nancy Ewalt was being dropped off at her classmate’s house, Nancy Clutter, to accompany the Clutter family for church services. No one answered her knock and she felt uncomfortable just walking in uninvited, so she and her father drove to another friend’s house, that of Susan Kidwell, who also went to church with the Clutter family. They all returned to the Clutter’s house and the two young girls went in search of what they thought was a family that had overslept.

The horror of the brutal slaying of the Clutter family that they found is known around the world. The investigation of the crime, the capture, trial and hanging execution of the two young sociopaths, Richard Hickock and Perry Smith, took an investment of six years of Mr. Capote's life. The bestselling true crime novel is a classic. But I would not recommend reading this book late at night alone because you will experience evil that will send shivers down your spine.