

Horizon High School, *Literature to Film*, Mr. Seller

Read the four constructed response questions and type your answer for one of the following questions. Use Times New Roman Font, size 14. Responses are graded on quality not quantity. Use the film *Capote* and novel *In Cold Blood* to explore the characters and storyline in order to provide support for your answers and to properly address the questions. Constructed response verbiage is posted in the classroom, on this website and at the bottom of this assignment.

Thematic Constructed Response Questions

Insider/Outsider Stance of Central Characters: Examine the Clutter's status as insiders against Perry and Dick's status as misfits and outlaws. In their fantasies Perry and Dick both dream of becoming insiders by imagining themselves in stereotypical terms of American masculine identities. What are the specific attributes they imagine will give them not only insider status but celebrity status? Adolescents sometimes have dreams similar to Dick's and Perry's. Does the novel suggest why some people out-grow of these dreams and others do not? Does the novel suggest why some people act out while others, who might secretly have the same dreams, do not?

Solitary Contemplation: Locate passages that depict Perry Smith's fantasy life. He seems almost unable to tell the difference between his inner life and reality. Compare and contrast Smith's fantasies with those of other characters from other works, such as *Gatsby*, for example. Dick Hickock seems to have less of an inner life, but what are his fantasies? Alvin Dewey, the investigator, also has passages that depict his thoughts. Contrast his reflections to Perry's and Dick's.

The American Dream: Much of literature today suggests that the American Dream is being threatened by lawlessness. Some version of the American Dream seems to provoke Perry and Smith to commit their crime; and Herb Clutter, who is its embodiment, suddenly loses everything—his well-ordered life and those of his family are senselessly destroyed in one night. Do you think our literature's fascination with the outlaw and society's anxiety over becoming victims is an accurate reflection of our lives today? Does, or does not, thoughtful literature (opposed to thrillers) offer anything to help us better understand the times in which we live and better cope with our anxieties?

American History: Holcomb, Kansas appeared to Capote as the very embodiment of traditional American ideas—hard work and endurance, living close to the land, strong religious traditions, a sense of community; and the Clutters seemed an exemplary family, wherein, the father was a strong provider and authority figure who was raising his children to become successful, contributing adults. The crime, however, suggests that history has the potential of becoming a nightmare against which the individual has little control, and that the state can exercise control only after the fact. In addition to crime, what are some of the other themes in literature today that suggest that history can, of perhaps already has, become nightmare?

Key Verbs and Tasks used in Constructive Response

- Analyze:** Examining carefully by looking at the different parts of the whole and figuring out how they are related to each other.
- Apply:** Using what you have learned to demonstrate show, or relate something.
- Compare:** Using examples to show how things are similar.
- Contrast:** Using examples to show how things are different.
- Evaluate:** Making a judgment backed up with support.
- Infer:** Making an educated guess or hypothesizing... reading between the lines.
- Interpret:** Explaining a possible meaning of a text
- Paraphrase:** Putting the author's ideas into your own words
- Predict:** Using information available to make an educated guess about future events
- Summarize:** Presenting the author's main ideas in a shortened form
- Support:** Using specific facts to "back up" your answer, utilize details and examples from the text.
- Synthesize:** Combining several ideas and making something new