

ICB Blog : Select one prompt and two questions; Five paragraphs in total.

1. Questions About Religion

1. Why is Mr. Clutter so adamant that it's out of the question for Nancy to marry a Catholic? Is that religious intolerance?
2. Do you think Capote means to convey that religious faith is what makes people do the right thing?
3. Would the people of Holcomb be accepting of a Jewish or Muslim neighbor? How about an atheist?
4. Why is Don Cullivan so intent on saving Perry's soul?

In the story as recounted by Capote, we can make a reasonable generalization that all the good guys are believers; the bad guys are not.

Even when they're facing death, Perry and Dick are indifferent to the idea of God, salvation, etc. We'd think most people ponder this when they know they're about to take a ride on the "Big Swing."

2. Questions About Men and Masculinity

1. What is it about rural areas that seems to make them more traditional in their values?
2. Do you think it's surprising that Capote was eventually so well-accepted by the locals?
3. Would Kenyon and Nancy Clutter have grown up to have traditional families like their parents?
4. What frees up Herb Clutter and Alvin Dewey to break some stereotypes of husbands?

Traditional sex roles create social harmony because everyone knows what's expected of them, just like [Tevye says](#).

Traditional sex roles prevent people from achieving their potential and create bitterness and disharmony.

3. Questions About Women and Femininity

1. How do you think that, as a woman, Harper Lee's presence may have made it easier for Capote to be accepted into Holcomb society?
2. Do Dick and Perry have the same view of women as the men in Holcomb do?
3. Would men or women object more to a female mayor in 1959 Garden City?
4. Why do you think there were there no women on death row in Kansas in 1959?

.As much as she wants to please and obey her father, Nancy Clutter would have eventually married Bobby Rupp despite her father's objections. After all, the 60s are just around the corner.

Mrs. Meier is the ideal woman in the book—industrious, a great cook, not afraid of the prisoners, and unconditionally loving.

4. Questions About Family

1. Whose memories of their family do you think are more accurate—Perry's or his sister's? Why?
2. How has the definition of a family changed since the time of this book?
3. What makes the Clutter family seem so perfect to the townspeople?
4. How does Bonnie Clutter's depression affect the roles of the people in her family?

Isolated people like Perry, who have no close family ties, are at high risk for social deviance.

Perry was at high risk for deviance because of his family's DNA, not their treatment of him.

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5. Questions About Criminality

1. Is there ever a situation where a person's life is so bad that they can't be held responsible for their crimes?
2. In your opinion, who was the most cold-blooded killer on death row?
3. What aspects of Holcomb's community might be seen as a deterrent to serious crime?
4. Do you think Dick Hickock was capable of pulling the trigger?

No matter how bad things are, people still have a choice about whether or not to commit a crime.

Society creates criminals by making people desire things like expensive shoes or cars when it's impossible for some people to ever be able to have them.

6. Questions About Madness

1. Who was the most seriously mentally ill of the death row inmates we read about?
2. How disturbed would one of the death row inmates have to be in order to be found not guilty by reason of insanity?
3. Do you think the M'Naghten Rule makes it harder to get a ruling of not guilty because of mental illness?
4. What allows a person to commit a murder then laugh about it?

Capote would have said that the psychiatrists were right about Dick being a sociopath, but wrong about Perry being schizophrenic.

Perry has less control over his behavior than Dick.

7. Questions About Visions of Rural America

1. What details does the author use to convey his views of Holcomb and Garden City? Why does Capote focus so much on the religious beliefs of the townspeople?
2. Do you buy the picture the author paints of this small town?
3. Is this one of those "there's something sinister going on in Paradise" stories?

Life in Holcomb means lifelong friendships, security, and contentment. Everyone looks out for everyone else. Let's move there.

Life in Holcomb is isolating, limiting, boring, and lacking culture or fun. We're moving to Topeka.

8. Questions About Plans and Dreams

1. Why do Dick and Perry's plans always seem doomed to failure?
2. How do the murders affect the townspeople's view of future planning?
3. What were the common aspects to all of Dick and Perry's plans?
4. What's the role of imagination in the plans and dreams of the characters in this book?

Herb Clutter was luckier than Perry and Dick because he was able to have his plans work out and theirs were thwarted at every turn.

Herb Clutter was more successful because he made longer-term, more realistic plans than Dick and Perry.