1. What effect is achieved through the use of the simile comparing grain elevators to Greek temples?

2. What is the purpose of the opening section of the text, ending with “and as strangers”? What details are discussed and why?

3. According to the text, what is Mr. Clutter’s only reason for “disquiet” in his life?

4. What aspect of River Valley Farm is Mr. Clutter’s pride and joy?
5. How do the narrative voice and the sentence structure of the text change when the story shifts from descriptions of the Clutter family to descriptions of Dick Hickock and Perry Smith?

6. How do comparisons between Perry’s physique on the one hand and images of weightlifters and jockeys on the other hand help establish Perry’s physical challenges?

7. How does Perry’s obsession with foreign countries and sunken treasures symbolize his social status as an outcast?

8. What is the purpose of introducing the Ashida family and their relationship to the Clutters?

9. What is the most significant element of Smith and Hickock’s big “score”? What does their agreement on this element foreshadow?
10. What do Holcomb citizens mean when they describe Kenyon as a boy who “lives in a world of his own”?

11. What is the biggest challenge to the friendship between Perry Smith and Willie-Jay?

12. What is the primary motivation behind Perry's decision to meet with Dick and become a part of the big “score”?

13. What is Hickock's primary motivation for persuading Smith to become part of his plan to rob the Clutter home?

14. As the Holcomb community gathers at Hartman's Café, what is the initial speculation about the killer or killers?
15. How does initial speculation about the murders change the atmosphere within the Holcomb community?

Persons Unknown

1. What aspect of the crime scene, as observed by Al Dewey examining photographs, foreshadows the eventual capture of the suspects?

2. How do the opening pages of this section serve to establish *In Cold Blood* as an important forerunner of the True Crime genre?

3. What effect is achieved through the simile that likens Dick’s confidence to a “kite that needed reeling in”?
4. What does Susan Kidwell find most disturbing about her visit to the funeral parlor? Why?

5. What is significant about the way Dick gains the store clerk’s confidence when attempting to pay with a check? How is this ironic?

6. What conclusion does Alvin Dewey draw about the murderers when he studies the crime scene photos once again? What leads him to his conclusion?

7. What does Perry’s behavior at the beach and swimming pool reveal about his character?

8. Why does Capote include the lengthy letter written by Perry’s father? What theme does the letter reinforce?
9. What is Barbara’s (Perry’s sister’s) motivation for suggesting that “we all were very adaptable” in her letter?

10. How are police investigators able to determine the order in which the Clutter family members were murdered?

11. How are Dick and Perry planning to return to the United States? What does their plan reveal about their state of mind following the Clutter murders?

Answer

1. What event in the opening pages of the section “Answer” turns the investigation around?
2. Why might Hickock’s father propose that Dick “wasn’t the same boy” after injuring his head in a car accident?

3. According to Mr. Hickock, what was unusual about Dick when he returned from his alleged trip to Fort Scott? Why is this observation significant?

4. What incident occurs on the road from Mexico to the United States that Perry calls a “goddam miracle”?

5. When Nye opens the box belonging to “Perry E. Smith,” what important evidence does he discover?

6. According to Mrs. Johnson, what paradox exists in Perry’s character?
7. How is investigator Dewey able to conceal a possible breakthrough in the case from the general public? Why does he consider it to be so important to keep new details of the case hidden?

8. Why is Smith disturbed by a newspaper account he reads when he and Hickock arrive in Miami, Florida?

9. To what extent does Hickock's sexuality contribute to his status as a societal outsider? What is Smith's reaction to Hickock's sexuality?

10. What tone characterizes Hickock's attitude when he is being interrogated by police after being apprehended in Las Vegas?

11. Contrast the two killers' attitudes.
12. According to Perry, what is his only regret about the night of the murders?

13. What is the effect, what is learned, and what is revealed about the killers through Capote's re-creating Smith's account of the events of the night of the murder?

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**The Corner**

1. What is Mrs. Meier's first impression of Perry Smith?

2. What changes does Perry want to make to his initial statement to police? What is his motivation for making the changes? What does this suggest about his character?

3. What logical inference can you draw from Smith's comment about his sister, when told that she was afraid of him?
4. What is significant about Smith's reaction to the letter written by Don Cullivan?

5. Explain Hickock's “Big Swing” metaphor.

6. What is the symbolic significance of the big yellow bird?

7. According to Dick's written statement composed in prison for his psychiatrist, what ultimately was Dick's motivation for invading the Clutter place?

8. According to Smith, who are the other “killers in the courtroom”?
9. For what purpose does Capote include Dr. Jones’s commentary about the defendants, even though it was not admitted into evidence during the trial?

10. Why does Perry go on a hunger strike? Why does he eventually change his mind and end his hunger strike?

11. What purpose might Capote have had to include the stories of the other men who are on Death Row?

12. What strategy does Dick pursue in order to appeal his conviction?

13. What effect is achieved by the alliteration in the closing sentence?