AP Composition *In Cold Blood* Essay

Write an inductive argument in which you analyze a question suggested by your reading of *In Cold Blood*. The essay should be 4-6 pages typed, double-spaced.

What To Write About

In crafting an inductive as opposed to deductive argument you will be foregoing a familiar, old form in favor of a new, unfamiliar one. At the same time, you may find the hardest part of this assignment will be choosing a topic. You can come at this task three ways:

--First, you can write about a question in the text, or something the author says. For instance, you could question Capote’s implication that Perry occupies a higher moral ground than Dick, as when he has Perry assert his “heroic” actions in preventing Dick from sexually assaulting Nancy. Here you might want to consider the paradox of Perry asserting his ability to exhibit “self control” and the stunted emotional nature that leads him to submit to Dick’s dominance in executing “The Score.”

--Second, you can write about a question with the text, or something you can't figure out about it. For example, you could write about why Herb Clutter fails to fight back and protect his family; you might want to consider the entire character of Alvin Dewey, his presence in the story and its meaning; Capote’s motives could bear similar scrutiny, especially his stance as “non-judgmental” narrator. Perhaps the most challenging of this kind of topic would involve examining why Dick and Perry killed the Clutters, particularly in terms of what Capote refers to as the “psychological accident” of how their personalities meshed.

--Third, you can write about a question suggested by the text, or something in your life. In this option, you could use the novel as springboard for an analysis of some aspect of your life. For example, you could compare and contrast your struggle with some aspect of your background to Dick or Perry’s situation, exploring why each of you reacted as you did.

How To Write About It

For this essay you may not begin by saying, “Dick and Perry kill the Clutter family because they are trying to prove their manliness,” then give three examples to prove that, and then close by saying, “Dick and Perry kill the Clutter family because they are trying to prove their manliness.” Instead, you must ask and answer a question or series of questions including the word **why*.***

In doing this, you must follow the inductive form. Here, the focusing question is key to success. It should be neither too broad ("Why has drug abuse been a problem throughout human history?") nor too narrow ("Why did Perry take so many aspirin while he gave his confession?"). Once you find that middle ground, your job is to offer answers to that question. These answers will serve as support as you move toward your thesis, a unifying concept that includes but does not repeat the main ideas, toward the end of the essay.

By now, your most important responsibility should be clear. Once you find a topic and craft a focusing question, it is not enough just to describe the implications of that question, you must analyze your subject by asking and answering **why** questions about it. Furthermore, you must provide support for the evidence you offer. For example, you may not simply assert that Perry’s meekness makes him Dick’s moral better; you must provide specific examples of how that is so, and speculate on **why** it is so, as you move toward your thesis.

Focus Correction Areas

Your essay will be evaluated, though not exclusively, in three specific areas: 1) the introduction must include a clear, well-defined focusing question; 2) the essay must include at least three examples of cause and effect relationships; 3) style and mechanics must demonstrate a clear awareness of rules and principles found in *The Elements of Style*.

Due Dates

Topic/Notes/Outline are due no later than Tuesday, 4/17; rough draft is due for peer critiques no later than Thursday, 4/19; final draft is due no later than Tuesday, 4/24.

Manuscript Requirements

Please title your essay. As this is a major writing assignment, you should follow the MLA guidelines you received at the beginning of the school year.