Part 2: “Persons Unknown”:
Section 1 – The Investigation Begins

Vocabulary
annihilating – devastating
peculiarities – odd traits or habits
potentialities – potential abilities
prevarications – lies
promontory – a high point of land
solemnized – married

1. Perry reads a newspaper article about the homicide. He notices a grammatical error in the story. He points out to Dick that the sentence, “For this killer or killers,” should read, “For this killer or these killers.” What does this correction reveal about Perry’s character?
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2. During the same dinner conversation, Perry gets Dick to admit that he had been given false information about River Valley Farm. Dick claims that does not matter because “on the whole it was perfect,” since there are no clues leading back to them. What does this exchange reveal about Dick’s character?
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3. Perry claims there is one person who can link them to the crime. Who is that person?
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4. Perry thinks about the time when he lived in an orphanage and the nuns beat him for wetting his bed. What image in his dream gave him relief?
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5. How does Dick use his charm to get money from retailers so that he and Perry can afford to continue their journey to Mexico?
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6. What two signs of “comfort” at the scene of the crime lead Dewey to believe the killer or killers had some compassion?

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7. Perry believes that he and Dick must have something wrong with them to do what they did to the Clutters. Dick says he does not think so; Dick thinks he is normal but that Perry might be crazy. What habits and behaviors of Perry does Dick think are strange?

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8. One motif of this book is distrust. Dick continually asks Perry if he really killed the black man in Las Vegas. Perry continually responds, “Sure I did.” The reader learns that Perry is lying, but he never shares the truth with Dick. How does this information touch on the motif of distrust?

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Part 2: “Persons Unknown”:
Section 2 – Back Story about Perry and His Family

Vocabulary

- admonishments – strong criticisms
- effeminate – having feminine qualities
- lucid – easily understood
- pragmatic – practical
- purloined – stolen
- septuagenarian – a person in his or her seventies

1. Tex Smith, Perry’s father, writes a letter to the parole board that details aspects of Perry’s upbringing. In the beginning, family life for Perry and his siblings was happy and normal. What does Tex claim created a turn for the worse for the children?

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2. According to Tex’s letter, what does he say Perry did to become King of the Kids during his schoolboy days?

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3. Perry is good at and enjoys working with his hands. However, his father writes that construction bosses will not hire him anymore. Why?

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4. What does Tex say Perry does if he is treated unkindly?

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5. How does Perry feel when he reads this letter?

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6. During his childhood, Perry’s parents formed a tandem called “Tex and Flo.” What did “Tex and Flo” do?

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7. Why does Perry hate nuns and everything related to God and religion?

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8. Why does Perry believe he was not promoted to rank of Corporal during his time in the Army, despite serving in the Korean War and earning a Bronze Star?

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9. Why was Perry delayed in joining his father in Alaska?

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10. What was the end result of the Trapper’s Den Lodge, Perry and Tex’s business venture?

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11. Perry’s first arrest came after he and a partner burglarized an office equipment store. How are they caught?

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12. Perry’s sister Barbara and Tex are his only remaining relatives. How did each of his other relatives die?

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13. While in prison for stealing the office supplies, Perry received a letter from his sister. In this letter, who does she blame for Perry’s current situation, and why?

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14. Perry has also kept an essay written by his prison friend, Willie-Jay. Willie-Jay makes five points regarding Barbara’s note. In brief, what are Willie-Jay’s five observations?

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15. Among the letters and keepsakes Perry has is a notebook full of complex words. What do these words reveal about Perry?

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16. As Dick and Perry reenter the U.S., what do they wait for as they stand on the side of the road?

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