

Interaction of Ideas

Analyzing Cause and Effect

NAME: _____

CLASS: _____

The actions and events that happen in a text are often connected in some way. When you read, it is your job to figure out how these things are connected. For example, one action or event might cause another action or event to happen. This type of connection is called “cause and effect.” A cause is the reason **why** something happens. An effect is **what** happens.

A cause-and-effect question asks how actions and events are connected. An author may use signal words or phrases such as “because,” “since,” or “as a result” to let you know that one event is a cause and another is an effect. However, there are many times when authors do not use signal words and phrases. How can you tell if one event is a cause and another is an effect? One way to figure this out is to ask questions.

- What action or event happened? Asking this can help you find the effect.
- Why did this action or event happen? Asking this can help you find the cause.

► Read this paragraph.



Sometimes a mistake leads to something great. Take the mistake made by baker Ruth Wakefield in 1930. One day she decided to make a batch of chocolate cookies. She started to mix all the ingredients. She realized she was missing one: baker’s chocolate. (That’s a special kind of chocolate used in baking.) What did she do? She cut up a regular chocolate bar and added the pieces to the dough. She thought the chocolate would melt evenly into the dough as the cookies baked. Wrong! When she opened the oven door, she didn’t find chocolate cookies. What she found was even better: chocolate chip cookies. Ruth’s invention soon became the most popular cookie in America.

The paragraph above explains how chocolate chip cookies were invented. Ask the questions from above to figure out the cause-and-effect connection.

- What happened (effect)? *Chocolate chip cookies were invented.*
- Why did this happen (cause)? *Ruth did not have baker’s chocolate and used cut-up pieces of a regular chocolate bar instead.*

You can also think of cause and effect like this: If there is no cause, there is no effect. In other words, if Ruth had not run out of baker’s chocolate, would chocolate chip cookies still have been invented that day in 1930? Probably not. If Ruth had had baker’s chocolate, there would have been no reason for her to chop up a regular chocolate bar. If there was no cause (running out of baker’s chocolate), there would be no effect (the invention of chocolate chip cookies).

When you read, ask yourself **what** actions and events happen and **why** they happen. Finding the cause-and-effect connections in a text can help you understand and remember the important ideas in a text.

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► Read these paragraphs and answer the questions that follow.



Julia has always loved planting and growing flowers. As a child, she planted flower seeds every spring. She watered the seeds and watched them grow. She was so excited to see the lovely flowers bloom. As an adult, it's no surprise that Julia decided to open her own flower shop. She grows beautiful flowers that people buy. She also teaches people how to plant seeds and grow flowers in their homes.

1. a. What did Julia do as an adult (effect)? _____

b. Why did Julia do it (cause)? _____



Leo Messi is one of the best soccer players in the world. From a very young age he was too good at soccer to play with children his own age. He always played with older and bigger boys. Leo did not mind being smaller than the other boys. Recently, he said that "being smaller forced me to be faster." By running quickly, he was able to get away from the bigger players. They could not knock him over and steal the ball.

2. a. What did Leo learn how to do as a soccer player (effect)? _____

b. Why did Leo learn it (cause)? _____



Severn Cullis-Suzuki is a writer who works to help the environment. She was born in Canada. As a child, she saw that the forests by her home were being cut down. She made a promise to do something about it. When she was ten years old, she and her friends formed a group to teach others about helping the Earth.

3. a. What did Severn do when she was ten years old (effect)? _____

b. Why did Severn do it (cause)? _____



Have you ever wondered why traffic lights are red, yellow, and green? Why not pink, purple, and orange? The reason is that some colors can make us do certain things. Like stop! The color red makes us look. This is important when drivers need to stop. It's also the reason that red is the color of stop signs around the world.

4. a. What color is used on stop signs around the world (effect)? _____

b. Why is this color used (cause)? _____
