



Cause & Effect

Definitions and Signal Words



Cause: an event or action that makes something happen (It tells us why something happened).

Effect: a change that results from a cause (It tells us what happened).

Cause and Effect relationships are the heart and soul of most storytelling (short stories, novels - fiction). IN fact, a story can't really happen without them. These relationships may be explicit (stated) or only hinted at, but they are vital to the progress of any story.

Nonfiction relies on cause-and-effect relationships as well, but they are usually discussed more explicitly. Editorials and persuasive essays use facts and arguments to affect and change your opinion or behavior. History and Science articles illustrate how certain events or facts cause other things to happen.

A cause-and-effect relationship works like a row of dominos. When one domino falls down, it makes the next one fall down - a chain reaction. Similarly, events in a text cause other events to happen.

Particular signal words are often used to announce cause-and-effect relationships. When you find these words in your reading, you should highlight them. Some of the signal words you should look for are:

Signal Words Indicating Cause:

because
the reason for
led to
was responsible for
contributes to
on account of

because of
since
on account of
produced
brings about
in order to

created by
caused by
due to
influence
makes or makes happen

Signal Words Indicating Effect:

since
therefore
consequently
outcome
hence

so
then
as a result of
subsequently
and so

finally
thus
for this reason
it follows that
as a consequence