Identifying Cause and Effect

Learning the Skill

If you watch television instead of studying for a test, you probably will not do well on the test. The cause—not studying for a test—leads to an effect—not getting a good grade. A cause is the reason that something happens. The result of what happens is called an effect. Learning to identify causes and effects helps you understand how and why things happen.

Use the following guidelines to help you identify causes and effects as you read:

- Identify what happened (the effect).
- Ask why an event occurred (the cause).
- Look for “clue words” that alert you to the cause and effect, such as because, led to, as a result, produced, and therefore.

Practicing the Skill

Directions: Read the passages below. Complete the diagrams that follow each passage to help you understand causes and effects. Remember that some effects can become the cause of yet another effect.

Oil-rich countries have built desalinization plants, making Southwest Asia the world’s largest leader in creating usable water from seawater. Desalinization is costly, however, so poor countries cannot afford this process and will continue to face water shortages.

1. Cause: Oil-rich countries have built desalinization plants. Effect: Poor countries cannot afford to use desalinization. Effect: Poor countries will continue to face water shortages.

The misuse of water in Southwest Asia has harmed the land. The climate is dry in much of the region, causing irrigation water to evaporate quickly, which leaves salt deposits behind. This makes the land less fertile.

Cause: Climate is dry. Effect: Land is less fertile.
Overall, the region's population is growing rapidly. This is due to several factors. As a result of improved health care, fewer infants are dying than in the past. In addition, better medical care for adults means that people are living longer than before. At the same time, the birthrate has remained at fairly high levels.

1. Cause: Fewer infants are dying.

2. Cause: Birthrate has remained at fairly high levels.

3. Effect: Fewer infants are dying.

4. Effect: Fewer infants are dying.