

Cause and Effect

Overview: Students will track the causes and effects of simulated life events.

Grade Level: 9th to 12th

Objectives

Students will:

- understand that every event has many possible causes and many possible effects
- complete a cause and effect graphic organizer to visually represent, outline, and organize information
- record relationships among facts, ideas, and events
- develop critical thinking strategies by identifying, analyzing, and synthesizing information gleaned from the simulation software

National Education Standards

- Social Studies: I, III, IV, V, VI, IX, X
- English Language Arts: 3, 5, 8, 12
- Technology: 1, 2, 3, 5, 6
- Geography: 4, 6, 10

(See page X for a detailed description of each Standard.)

Materials

- REAL LIVES software
- Cause and Effect (student handout)
- Colored markers or highlighter pens

Procedure

1. Help students to understand that all decisions and actions in their simulated lives (and real lives) have related consequences. Draw a sample three-column chart (see sketch) on the chalkboard and discuss some examples of the types of events/causes/effects students may come across during the simulation. Remind students that when we write about cause and effect, we determine the reasons that something happened and the consequences of its happening.

As events occur in the simulation, students need to select the Learn More options **and** keep a careful eye on all statistical data so that they can evaluate and analyze it to draw sound conclusions and make the best choices. For example, in the first event shown in the sample chart, a student would select Learn More to find out about the disease, and then look at the statistical data on Health to determine possible causes for the father becoming ill. That would include looking at such data as the percentage of population (urban or rural) with access to safe water and the percentage of population (urban or rural) with access to healthcare services.

Example chart

Event	Cause(s)	Effect(s)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Father contracts schistosomiasis 	Possible: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Contact with parasitic worm-infested water Safe water sources not available (SWR: 29%) Lack of good healthcare (HSR: 30%) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Have to leave school Take a job as a laborer
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I have to serve time in the military 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Political unrest in region causes war to break out Country has participated in war or had widespread political violence in 25% of years in the last quarter century. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> My family's monthly income and net worth plummets since I am not able to contribute my regular salary.
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invitation to begin smoking 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Some friends smoke and they want me to be one of the gang. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> I choose not to smoke so my health and resistance improves.

2. Distribute three copies of the student handout to each student before starting a new simulation. Tell students that they are to track (on the handouts) 12 events, their causes, and effects during the playing of the simulation. If desired, students can keep all personal/household events on one handout and all country-related events on another. Too, some students may want to keep track of more than 12 events. (Note that for some students, it may be easier to identify the event first, then the effect, followed by the cause.)
3. Remind students to keep adding to the handouts throughout the whole simulation and to look for “effects” that might be felt long after the initial event. For example, a decision to decline a marriage proposal early on might affect the family’s net worth many years down the road, or a country’s drought might produce social and economic impacts for many years to come.
4. When done, have students use colored markers or highlighting pens to color-code their charts. Use one color to shade all entries that they believe were events over which they had personal control (e.g., selecting a career, lying to a friend) and another color to shade those events over which they believe they had no control (e.g., an outbreak of war).
5. Ask students to present, one by one, oral summaries of the major events in their simulated lives and the related causes/effects.
6. Help students process all of the information and relate it to their own lives with post-activity discussions centered around life’s events, causes and effects—those that we can influence in a positive or negative way and those we can’t.

Assessment

Collect and evaluate students' charts. Then conduct a teacher/student interview (speaking with each student, one on one) to give students the opportunity to talk about all parts of the activity and the processes by which they completed it. Sample questions:

- "What conclusions can you draw from your charts?"
- "Can you explain the two main differences behind these two causes and effects?"
- "In your simulated life, could you have made a different decision that would have had a different life outcome?"
- "What was the easiest/most difficult part of the activity? Why?"
- "If you were to do the activity again, what might you do differently? Why?"

Extension Activities

1. Create a class Current Events bulletin board by having students clip and bring into class articles from newspapers or magazines, or printed stories from Web-based news sites (e.g., CNN.com). Students can briefly summarize and share the news stories aloud. Then have the class work together to create one large Event/Cause/Effect graphic organizer (using the student handout format) to be hung on the wall. The Events should be taken from the Current Events news stories. As world news unfolds throughout the school year, students may need to add additional items to the Cause and Effect areas of the chart.
2. Help students to understand that an important part of geography is the cause and effect relationship between the natural environment and human beings. The environment directly impacts the ways in which people live and the ways in which people make a living. Have students work in pairs to research such topics as land-use, natural resources, climate, and vegetation in their simulated birth countries. They can create topographical maps, posters, or murals to organize and present their research to the class. Remind students to select the Factbook and History Links in the simulation to find detailed information on each country.
3. If you have regular Internet access, consider matching students with keypals (e-mail penpals) in other countries. There are several organizations that provide this service to schools free (or for a small fee) so that students from around the world can connect and interact with one another via e-mail, video, and/or live Web chats. Two recommended keypal sites: Intercultural E-mail Classroom Connections (iecc.org) and E-Pals Classroom Exchange (epals.com). Once initial contacts with keypals are made, your students can discuss their experiences with being "born" into the keypals' birth countries to discover whether or not their "virtual lives" are similar to the real lives of their keypals.