

The Academic Essay: Cause-Effect Analysis

Overview: Analyze the relationship between choices and consequences within a given topic or subject, showing the reader your mastery of the topic and ability to teach others about it. Responding to this prompt usually involves explaining how a problem is caused, or how a solution will fundamentally work.

Mode: Informing, Teaching

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Problem (Obstacle / Flaw): Whether or not you're analyzing a problem or solution, there will always be a "**problem**" (**obstacle/flaw**), story-wise, that will function as the "cause" or "effect."

- If analyzing a problem, then the story "**obstacle**" or "**flaw**" is the effect. In other words, individuals make **choices** that result in something negative or problematic. You are tasked with analyzing the relationship between those **choices**.
- If analyzing a solution, then the problem is inspiration for your Cause-Effect Analysis. In that case, the cause will be positive **choices** leading to a positive result, or **growth**.

Goal: Society always aims to improve itself. Therefore, the **goal** in the story of a Cause-Effect Analysis is for society to improve itself financially, ethically, medically, morally, and so on.

- If you are analyzing the cause of a problem, then you need to show how an important **goal** isn't being pursued; rather, individuals are making **choices** that hurt society. Explain how this causes negative effects. Your Conclusion should return to the positive **goal** and how to begin achieving it.
- If you are analyzing the cause of a solution, then the **goal** is much clearer, and should be packaged right into the solution you teach the reader about.

Choice: Regardless of what you are analyzing, individuals will be making **choices**. Negative **choices** are usually **not sacrificial**, resulting in society's problems. Positive, **sacrificial choices**, however, lead to society's solutions. Make this relationship clear whether you are analyzing a problem or its solution.

Sacrifice: In general, society's problems are caused by selfish **choices** that require others to **sacrifice**, not the self. When thousands of individuals begin to believe that these negative **choices** are okay, society's greatest **problems** arise. However, individual **sacrificial choices**, when similarly multiplied, lead to societal **growth** and improvement.

Growth: Address **growth** in your Conclusion by reiterating the relationship between negative **choices** and suffering, versus positive, **sacrificial** choices and the rewards. Your analysis must be phrased as teaching, without any direct addresses to the reader ("you") – however, it can still target the users in the subject area with a 3rd-person call to action.

Academic Essay Vocabulary: Every topic involves people who care about it. For the purpose of these placemats, planning sheets, and rubrics, those individuals will be called "users." Voters are "users," as are buyers, drivers, parents, students – anyone directly affected by or involved in the topic given by the scholarship essay prompt.

