

1 Review the Skill

The actions, thoughts, and conversations of people in stories have consequences that affect, or influence, events as the story progresses. These actions, thoughts, and conversations are **causes** that lead to other actions or situations, called **effects**. One cause can create more than one effect, and one effect may have more than one cause. These causes and effects shape the developments of a story.

2 Refine the Skill

By refining the skill of identifying cause and effect in fiction, you will improve your study and test-taking abilities, especially as they relate to the GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts Test. Read the passage below. Then answer the questions that follow.

THE NARRATOR FEELS UNWELL

a The description of John has a clear cause-and-effect structure, with a cause given first, then a series of effects following.

b The narrator gives "one reason" for not getting well faster. The word **reason** signals a cause. In this case, the reason, surprisingly, is that her husband is a physician.

John laughs at me, of course, but one expects that in marriage. John is practical in the extreme. He has no patience with faith, an intense horror of superstition, and he scoffs openly at any talk of things not to be felt and seen and put down in figures.

John is a physician, and perhaps—(I would not say it to a living soul, of course, but this is dead paper and a great relief to my mind)—perhaps that is one reason I do not get well faster.

You see he does not believe I am sick!

And what can one do?

If a physician of high standing, and one's own husband, assures friends and relatives that there is really nothing the matter with one but temporary nervous depression—a slight hysterical tendency—what is one to do?

My brother is also a physician, and also of high standing, and he says the same thing.

From THE YELLOW WALLPAPER by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, © 1892

1. What causes John to want things to be "put down in figures"?

- A. John has no patience with faith.
- B. John has a horror of superstition.
- C. John is practical in the extreme.
- D. John is a physician.

2. Why does the narrator feel powerless?

- A. She knows that nothing is wrong with her.
- B. Her husband and brother do not believe she is sick.
- C. She has a temporary nervous depression.
- D. She is not getting well despite her husband's treatment.

TEST-TAKING TIPS

When looking for cause-and-effect relationships, complete this statement: "Because of [cause], [effect] happened." One event leads to the next. Look for connections, other than simply time sequence.

★ **Spotlighted Item: DRAG-AND-DROP**

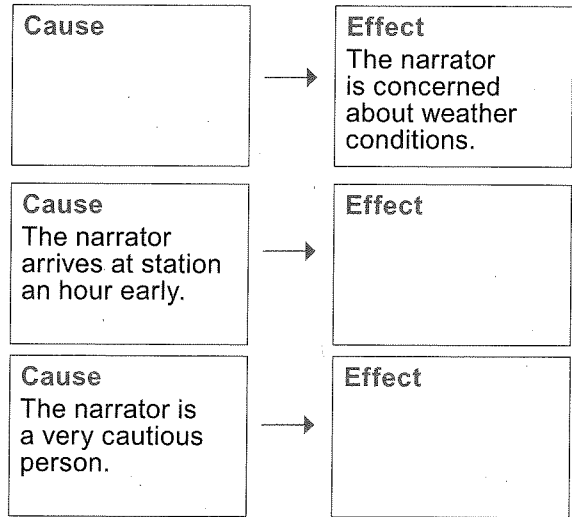
DIRECTIONS: Read the passage and the question. Then use the drag-and-drop option to complete the chart.

THE NARRATOR PREPARES FOR HIS JOURNEY

- 1 I was on my way to Montreal to deliver a lecture. It was mid-winter and I had been warned that the temperature was ten degrees lower than in New York. Newspapers reported that trains had been stalled in the snow and fishing villages cut off, so that food and medical supplies had to be dropped to them by plane.
- 2 I prepared for the journey as though it were an expedition to the North Pole. I put on a heavy coat over two sweaters and packed warm underwear and a bottle of cognac in case the train should be halted somewhere in the fields. In my breast pocket I had the manuscript I intended to read—an optimistic report on the future of the Yiddish language.
- 3 In the beginning, everything went smoothly. As usual, I arrived at the station an hour before train departure and therefore could find no porter. The station teemed with travelers and I watched them, trying to guess who they were, where they were going, and why.
- 4 None of the men was dressed as heavily as I. Some even wore spring coats.

From THE LECTURE by Isaac Bashevis Singer, © 1968

3. Drag and drop the **most** likely cause or effect into the correct location in the chart.



- | |
|--|
| Trains have been stalled in the snow. |
| The narrator has his speech in his pocket. |
| The narrator finds no porter to help with luggage. |
| The narrator observes other travelers. |
| The narrator prepares for extreme conditions. |

3 Master the Skill

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage, read each question, and choose the **best** answer.

THE GUEST WANTS INFORMATION

- 1 "Sylvy, Sylvy!" called the busy old grandmother again and again, but nobody answered, and the small husk bed was empty and Sylvia had disappeared.
- 2 The guest waked from a dream, and remembering his day's pleasure hurried to dress himself that it might sooner begin. He was sure from the way the shy little girl looked once or twice yesterday that she had at least seen the white heron, and now she must really be made to tell. Here she comes now, paler than ever, and her worn old frock is torn and tattered, and smeared with pine pitch. The grandmother and the sportsman stand in the door together and question her, and the splendid moment has come to speak of the dead hemlock-tree by the green marsh.
- 3 But Sylvia does not speak after all, though the old grandmother fretfully rebukes her, and the young man's kind, appealing eyes are looking straight in her own. He can make them rich with money; he has promised it, and they are poor now. He is so well worth making happy, and he waits to hear the story she can tell.
- 4 No, she must keep silence! What is it that suddenly forbids her and makes her dumb? Has she been nine years growing and now, when the great world for the first time puts out a hand to her, must she thrust it aside for a bird's sake? Sylvia cannot speak; she cannot tell the heron's secret and give its life away. The murmur of the pine's green branches is in her ears, she remembers how the white heron came flying through the golden air and how they watched the sea and the morning together, and Sylvia cannot speak; she cannot tell the heron's secret and give its life away.

From A WHITE HERON by Sarah Orne Jewett, © 1886

4. Because Sylvia does not tell her grandmother and the guest what they want to know,
 - A. the guest pays the grandmother for his lodging and leaves.
 - B. Sylvia's grandmother encourages Sylvia to be more outgoing.
 - C. Sylvia's grandmother scolds her for not sharing the location of the heron.
 - D. the guest attempts to hunt the heron on his own.
5. What leads the guest to think Sylvia has seen the white heron?
 - A. Sylvia's inability to speak
 - B. Sylvia's torn dress
 - C. the grandmother's confession
 - D. the way Sylvia looks
6. Why does the grandmother want Sylvia to tell the guest about the white heron?
 - A. Sylvia likes to entertain guests with stories.
 - B. The guest has offered them money.
 - C. The grandmother wants to find out about the white heron.
 - D. Sylvia knows a great deal about local birds.
7. Why does Sylvia keep silent?
 - A. She is unsure of the heron's location.
 - B. She has trouble speaking to strangers.
 - C. She wants her grandmother to ask for more money.
 - D. She fears the guest will harm the heron.
8. What **most** likely happens because Sylvia keeps her secret?
 - A. Sylvia's grandmother becomes rich.
 - B. The guest finds the white heron.
 - C. The white heron escapes capture.
 - D. Sylvia's grandmother praises her.

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage, read each question, and choose the **best** answer.

A FLIGHT FROM MIAMI

1 A woman who had traveled a great deal in planes, and had never trusted them because she understood nothing about them, sat in the double front seat behind the magazine rack. This was the best seat, as she knew, because there was enough room to stretch your legs. Also you could see well from here, if you wanted to see. Now, for a moment she looked out the window and saw that the few palm trees at the far edge of the field were blowing out in heavy plumes against the sky. There was something so wrong about Miami that even a beautiful night, sharp with stars, only seemed a real-estate advertisement. The woman pulled off her earrings and put them carelessly in her coat pocket. She ran her hands through her very short dark upcurling hair, deliberately making herself untidy for the night ahead. She hunched her shoulders to ease the tired stiffness in her neck and slouched down in the chair. She had just leaned her head against the chair back and was thinking of nothing when the man's voice said, Is this place taken? No, she said without looking at him. She moved nearer to the window. Anyhow, she said to herself, only eight or ten hours or whatever it is to New York; even if he snores, he can't snore all the time.

From MIAMI-NEW YORK by Martha Gellhorn, © 1948

9. Because the woman is an experienced traveler, she knows
- A. to arrive at the airport on time.
 - B. which seat is most comfortable.
 - C. not to be bothered by delays.
 - D. how long the trip will take.

10. Why does the narrator describe Miami as "so wrong"?
- A. Miami is not as beautiful as other cities.
 - B. The woman in the story dislikes Miami.
 - C. Miami is in a dangerous tropical location, prone to hurricanes.
 - D. Miami looks more like a real-estate advertisement than a city.
11. The woman speaks to the man and then moves nearer the window. The **most** likely reason for her change of position is to
- A. hear the man's conversation.
 - B. be rude to the man.
 - C. make room for the man.
 - D. see better from the window.
12. Later in the story, the man tries to talk to the woman after the plane lifts off. On the basis of the woman's behavior in this passage, what is the **most** likely effect the man's attempts at conversation will have on the woman?
- A. She will try to ignore the man.
 - B. She will have a long conversation with him.
 - C. She will begin to snore.
 - D. She immediately will ask to change her seat.
13. Travelers might behave as the woman in the story does because they
- A. want to meet other travelers.
 - B. want to be left alone.
 - C. enjoy looking at scenery.
 - D. do not enjoy traveling.



1 Learn the Skill

In Lesson 5, you learned about **cause and effect** in nonfiction writing. In fiction writing, too, authors use cause-and-effect relationships to develop their stories. A **cause** is an element, such as an action, an event, or a situation that makes something happen. An **effect** is what happens as a result of that cause. What one character does in one part of the story can affect the same character or another character in another part of the story. A cause can have more than one effect and an effect more than one cause.

Effects can be both positive and negative. The outcome of stories often depends on whether causes lead to effects that are planned or unplanned.

2 Practice the Skill

By practicing the skill of identifying cause and effect in fiction, you will improve your study and test-taking abilities, especially as they relate to the GED® Reasoning Through Language Arts Test. Read the passage below. Then answer the question that follows.

THE STRANGE HOUSE

So I will let it alone and talk about the house. ...

a Causes and effects have connections. "Some legal trouble" caused the house to be empty for years.

There was some legal trouble. I believe, something about the heirs and co-heirs; anyhow, the place has been empty for years. That spoils my ghostliness, I am afraid, but I don't care—there is something strange about the house—I can feel it.

I even said so to John one moonlight evening, but he said what I felt was a draught [draft], and shut the window.

b The words **so** and **therefore** often signal an effect. Here, **so** means "therefore" and signals that the narrator's action is an effect.

I get unreasonable angry with John sometimes. I'm sure I never used to be so sensitive. I think it is due to this nervous condition.

But John says if I feel so, I shall neglect proper self-control; so I take pains to control myself—before him, at least, and that makes me very tired.

I don't like our room a bit. I wanted one downstairs that opened on the piazza and had roses all over the window, and such pretty old-fashioned chintz hangings! But John would not hear of it.

From THE YELLOW WALLPAPER by Charlotte Perkins Gilman, © 1892

USING LOGIC

Use logic to determine whether a particular cause could have led to an event. Ask yourself, "Why did this happen?" Note, too, that cause-and-effect questions often begin with the word *why*.

1. Why does John shut the window?

- A. The narrator feels a chill from the open window.
- B. The narrator says the house is strange and spooky.
- C. John has a nervous condition and is sensitive to cold.
- D. John does not want to see the moonlight.

3 Apply the Skill

DIRECTIONS: Read the passage, read each question, and choose the **best** answer.

FROM NEBRASKA TO BOSTON

1 I RECEIVED one morning a letter, written in pale ink, on glassy, blue-lined note-paper, and bearing the postmark of a little Nebraska village. This communication, worn and rubbed, looking as though it had been carried for some days in a coat-pocket that was none too clean, was from my Uncle Howard. It informed me that his wife had been left a small legacy by a bachelor relative who had recently died, and that it had become necessary for her to come to Boston to attend to the settling of the estate. He requested me to meet her at the station, and render her whatever services might prove necessary. On examining the date indicated as that of her arrival, I found it no later than to-morrow. He had characteristically delayed writing until, had I been away from home for a day, I must have missed the good woman altogether.

2 The name of my Aunt Georgiana called up not alone her own figure, at once pathetic and grotesque, but opened before my feet a gulf of recollections so wide and deep that, as the letter dropped from my hand, I felt suddenly a stranger to all the present conditions of my existence, wholly ill at ease and out of place amid the surroundings of my study. I became, in short, the gangling farmer-boy my aunt had known, scoured with chilblains and bashfulness, my hands cracked and raw from the corn husking. I felt the knuckles of my thumb tentatively, as though they were raw again. I sat again before her parlor organ, thumbing the scales with my stiff, red hands, while she beside me made canvas mittens for the huskers.

3 The next morning, after preparing my landlady somewhat, I set out for the station. When the train arrived I had some difficulty in finding my aunt. She was the last of the passengers to alight, and when I got her into the carriage she looked not unlike one of those charred, smoked bodies that firemen lift from the débris of a burned building. She had come all the way in a day coach; her linen duster had become black with soot and her black bonnet gray with dust during the journey. When we arrived at my boarding-house the landlady put her to bed at once, and I did not see her again until the next morning.

From A WAGNER MATINEE by Willa Cather, © 1904

2. The narrator's aunt must go to Boston to
 - A. visit her nephew.
 - B. settle a relative's estate.
 - C. get away from her husband.
 - D. attend a funeral.
3. Why does the letter from the narrator's uncle arrive so late?
 - A. The carrier does not deliver the letter promptly.
 - B. The narrator's uncle sent the letter at the last moment.
 - C. The narrator's aunt and uncle had little time to prepare for an unexpected trip.
 - D. The narrator's uncle had to attend to problems relating to a legacy.
4. How does the thought of Aunt Georgiana affect the narrator?
 - A. The narrator fondly remembers his childhood interactions with his aunt.
 - B. The narrator resents his uncle for asking him to help his aunt.
 - C. The narrator recalls the awkwardness and discomfort of his childhood.
 - D. The narrator feels excited to reconnect with his aunt.
5. As a result of her journey in the day coach, Aunt Georgiana
 - A. is covered with soot and dust.
 - B. arrives in Boston sooner than expected.
 - C. is the last passenger to step off the train.
 - D. hides from her nephew and his landlady.
6. What is the **most** likely reason Aunt Georgiana goes to bed immediately?
 - A. She feels uncomfortable around her nephew.
 - B. She is embarrassed about her appearance.
 - C. She could not sleep on the train.
 - D. She is exhausted from her long journey.