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# Cause and Effect: Using Expository Writing to Problem-Solve

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# UNDERSTANDING BY DESIGN

## Unit Cover Page

Unit Title: Cause and Effect: Using Expository Writing to Problem-Solve

Grade Level: 7

Subject/Topic Area(s): English Language Arts / Cause and Effect Essay

Designed By: Mollie Knapp

Time Frame: 3-4 Weeks

School District: North East ISD

School: Jackson Middle School

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### **Brief Summary of Unit** (Including curricular context and unit goals):

The goal of this unit is for students to understand cause and effect relationships and how analyzing these relationships can lead to better problem-solving.

In their performance assessment, students will research the causes and effects related to a teen issue topic of their choice. Students will then incorporate their research into a cause and effect essay. In addition to their research, students will give advice on what steps their readers can take to make good decisions when faced with this topic. For example, if a student were writing an essay about the effects of owning a pet, he/she would probably advise readers to make sure they have sufficient amounts of time and money to devote to the animal before making the commitment.

Students take part in various learning activities as they build up to their performance assessment, including practicing the use of proactive response, which is taken from Stephen R. Covey's book, *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*.

### Cause and Effect: Using Expository Writing to Problem-Solve

| Stage 1 – Desired Results   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| <p><b>Established Goals</b><br/> <i>TEKS:</i><br/>                     7. 14 Follow the Writing Process<br/>                     7.17 Expository Text: Cause and Effect<br/>                     (i) uses effective introductions and conclusions<br/>                     (ii) clearly states purpose<br/>                     (iii) logically organized with appropriate facts<br/>                     (iv) synthesizes ideas<br/>                     (v) incorporates sentence variety and transitions</p> | <b>Transfer</b>   |  |
|   | <p><i>Students will independently use their learning to...</i></p> <p>Research and write a cause and effect paper for teens concerning a relevant topic of their choice that discusses choices and consequences.</p>  |  |
|   | <b>Meaning</b>  |  |
|   | <p><b>Understandings</b><br/> <i>Students will understand that...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• All actions have consequences</li> <li>• Analyzing cause and effect relationships can lead to better understanding and potential problem-solving</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Essential Questions</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What are causes and effects?</li> <li>• What can recognizing causes and effects teach us?</li> <li>• How do our choices affect our lives?</li> <li>• How can we learn to respond proactively?</li> </ul>  |
|   | <b>Acquisition</b>  |  |
| <p><b>Knowledge</b><br/> <i>Students will know...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Vocabulary used to express causes and effects</li> <li>• Common organization of a cause and effect essay</li> <li>• Definitions of “proactive” and “reactive” behavior</li> <li>• Benefits of responding proactively</li> </ul>  | <p><b>Skills</b><br/> <i>Students will be able to...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify causes and effects</li> <li>• Analyze consequences and effectiveness of choices</li> <li>• Research causes and effects related to a specific topic</li> <li>• Predict possible outcomes of actions</li> <li>• Develop steps to respond proactively</li> <li>• Use the writing process</li> </ul> |  |
| Stage 2 – Evidence  |   |  |
| CODE<br>(M or T)  | Evaluative<br>Criteria<br>(for rubric)  |  |
| M<br>T<br>T   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Organized</li> <li>• Clear</li> <li>• Supported by evidence</li> </ul>   | <p>Performance Task(s)<br/> <i>Students will demonstrate meaning-making and transfer by...</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Researching the causes and effects of a self-selected topic</li> <li>• Developing alternative actions teens can take in order to produce different outcomes</li> <li>• Collaborating research and ideas into an essay that has a clearly stated purpose, appropriate facts, and offers advice to fellow</li> </ul> |

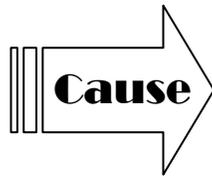
|     |  |  |
|-----|--|--|
| T   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Advises solutions</li> <li>• Concise</li> <li>• Accessible</li> </ul> | <p>teens</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Pre-AP Extension: Condense information from essays into visual products that help teens make proactive choices (products may take the form of a brochure, blog, RAFT writing piece, video).</li> </ul> |
| M   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Logical</li> </ul>  | <p>Other Evidence (e.g., formative)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Show evidence of basic understanding of cause and effect by creating a comic strip</li> </ul>   |
| A   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Accurate</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify causes and effects in video clips using graphic organizers</li> </ul>  |
| A+M | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proactive</li> </ul>  | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Describe differences in effects between proactive and reactive behavior through group discussion and response</li> </ul>  |
| M   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Creative</li> </ul>   | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Discuss possible changes in behavior to improve outcomes</li> </ul>   |

**Stage 3 – Learning Plan**

|                          |   |
|--------------------------|---|
| <b>CODE</b><br>(A, M, T) | <p>Pre-Assessment</p> <p><i>How will you check students' prior knowledge, skill levels, and potential misconceptions?</i></p> <p>Students will take part in a Think-Pair-Share, beginning with a five minute quick write answering the first two essential questions:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. <i>What are causes and effects?</i></li> <li>2. <i>What can recognizing causes and effects teach us?</i></li> </ol> |
|--------------------------|---|

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
| A | <p><b>Learning Activities</b></p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. As a class, read the book <i>If You Give a Mouse a Cookie</i> by Laura Joffe Numeroff. Have students discuss the pattern they noticed and introduce definitions for the words “cause” and “effect”.</li> <li>2. In partners, students are given a set of sentence strips. Students identify sentences as either cause or effect and write their own cause/effect to match it. Students then find their actual “partner” and evaluate their own answers. Discuss how one action can have many effects, and vice versa.</li> <li>3. Individually, students finish a comic strip showing a cause and effect/ chain of effects relationship.</li> <li>4. Watch movie clips and map causes and effects on graphic organizers and discuss as a class. Ask the following questions: <i>What actions did the character take? What led him or her to these actions?</i></li> <li>5. Introduce the two ways of responding to a situation: proactively or reactively (taken from Stephen R. Covey’s</li> </ol> | Progress Monitoring<br>(e.g., formative data)                                    |
| A |   | Self-assessment in no-risk environment   |
| M |   | Assess basic understanding   |
| M |   | Assess ability to identify cause and effect within the context of a larger story |
| A |   |  |

|   |   |   |
|---|---|---|
| M | <p><i>The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People</i>). Give a scenario that would cause many people stress, shaking both a bottle of water and a bottle of soda.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Many people are reactive—allowing their emotions to take over their heads. (This is symbolized by the shaken-up soda.) Brainstorm possible effects of this behavior.</li> <li>• Proactive people look for solutions (as shown by the bottle of water). Ask the questions: <i>How might someone who is proactive respond? What would be the effects of this behavior?</i> Record answers in a Venn diagram on chart paper.</li> </ul> | Informal assessment of understanding                      |
| M | 6. List ways that people can move from reactive to proactive response (using the visual of tapping on the soda can). <i>How can we slow down and change gears so that we respond proactively?</i>   |   |
| M | 7. Students are given various scenarios to discuss in groups of four. Record possible causes and effects related to the scenario and label effects as reactive or proactive behaviors.  | Assess ability to apply knowledge to real-life situations |
| A | 8. As a class, read examples of cause and effect essays and discuss. Create an outline of what should be included in their essays.  |   |
| A | 9. Students choose a topic related to teens to research possible causes and effects and spend time in the computer lab researching their topic.   | Use knowledge as a lens for research                      |
| A | 10. Students are introduced to vocabulary related to cause and effect.  |   |
| A | 11. Students practice outlining and writing paragraphs using an example topic.  |   |
| T | 12. Students write a rough draft of their essay, identifying possible causes and effects related to their topic (with supporting evidence), and giving advice on how to make the right choices.   | Assess all of Stage 1                                     |
| T | 13. Students have peer-conferences over their work and make revisions.  |   |
| T | 14. Students type final copies of their essays.<br>15. Students reflect on how they can translate to responding proactively when faced with daily decisions.  | Self Assessment of Stage 1                                |



*And*



## Essay

You will be writing an essay geared towards other teens about a topic of your choice. Like any kind of journalism, this will involve research, organization, and some creative thinking on your part. Look below for some research options or present your own idea to your editor-in-chief (your teacher).

|                   |                |                   |          |
|-------------------|----------------|-------------------|----------|
| Friends           | Peer Pressure  | Dating            | Exercise |
| Environment       | Healthy Eating | Cheating on Tests | Facebook |
| Music Downloading | Sports         | Drugs/Alcohol     | Jobs     |

**Step 1:** Choose your research topic: \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 2:** List as many causes and effects that are associated with your topic. Look below for an example.

If I was researching why some people choose to have a pet while others do not, my list of causes and effects might look something like this:

|                                       |                                 |
|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| <u>Causes for Having a dog:</u>       | <u>Effects of Having a dog:</u> |
| 1. Desire for companionship           | 1. More responsibility          |
| 2. You found one— compassion          | 2. Spending money               |
| 3. You think they're cute             | 3. Use of time                  |
| 4. You want something to take care of | 4. Friendship                   |
|                                       | 5. Happiness                    |

CAUSES

EFFECTS

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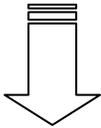
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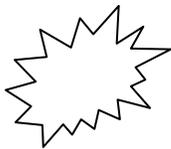
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**Step 3:** Cause and effect essays generally emphasize one side or the other. Decide if you are going to focus on **the causes or the effects** of your topic.

**Step 4:** Choose your top three causes or effects. These will be the points you hit on in your essay.



**Top Three Causes/Effects**



1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Step 5:** Brainstorm how you can encourage your readers to make the *proactive* choice when they come face-to-face with your topic. Remember that there are two ways to respond in any situation: proactively or reactively. Your goal is to help your reader consider different options before making a choice.

For example, if I was writing about the effects of having a dog, my conclusion would focus on ways someone can be proactive about making their choice. *It's best not to adopt a dog based solely on the fact that you think it is a cute animal. A proactive way to make the decision would be to draw up an idea of how much time and money would be involved for caring for the dog. If you are able to reach those needs, and you think the dog would make you a happier person, it might be a good choice. If you do not have the time or money, you should probably wait until you do.*

*Room for Brainstorming:*

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**Now you're ready to start writing your rough draft!**

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Cause and Effect Essay

### Grading Rubric

*Directions: Use the following grading rubric as a guide to complete your cause and effect essay. Staple this rubric to the front of your essay when you turn it in.*

\_\_\_\_ / 5     **Title:**            Your essay should have a creative title that is centered on your topic

\_\_\_\_ / 10     **Introduction:** You should have an effective and interesting introduction that spikes the reader's interest

\_\_\_\_ / 10     **Thesis:**            Your essay should have a clearly stated thesis (controlling idea)

\_\_\_\_ / 35     **Content:**            \_\_\_\_ / 15 Writer gives advice on making best choice  
                                  \_\_\_\_ / 10 Essay focuses on either the causes **or** effects  
                                  \_\_\_\_ / 5 Details are logical and supportive  
                                  \_\_\_\_ / 5 Essay is effectively organized by paragraphs

\_\_\_\_ / 20     **Grammar/Punctuation:**  
                                  \_\_\_\_ / 5 Spelling  
                                  \_\_\_\_ / 5 Capitalization  
                                  \_\_\_\_ / 5 Grammar  
                                  \_\_\_\_ / 5 Sentence Variety

\_\_\_\_ / 10     **Conclusion:**        Your conclusion should summarize your main points

\_\_\_\_ / 10     **Rough Draft:**      Your rough draft should be stapled to your final essay and show signs of editing and revision

\_\_\_\_ / 100     **Total Points**

Comments:

Our soccer game was cancelled.

Not only was it raining, but we could see lightning in the sky.

My dad was late to work and missed an important meeting.

There was a traffic accident that blocked all cars in one direction.

Ben stayed up watching T.V. all night.

Ben slept through his alarm and was late to first period.

The two girls were caught cheating on a quiz.

The girls were given a zero in the grade book.

My best friend got into a fight yesterday.

He was suspended from school and is staying at home today.

Melanie was recognized for her good behavior at school.

Melanie was rewarded with a trip to Six Flags Fiesta Texas.

The grass in my front yard had grown up to my waist!

My dad spent Saturday morning working on the lawn.

My dog got into some candy last night.

My family had to take my dog to the vet because he felt sick.

I found the shirt I wanted to wear today in the dirty laundry basket.

I wore a different shirt today and planned on washing my clothes this evening.

My sister wanted to be fluent in Spanish.

My sister studied abroad in Spain last summer.

I dropped the soda can on my way to the living room from the kitchen.

The soda can sprayed all over my sister when she opened it up.

The weather was beautiful this weekend.

My family spent the whole weekend outside.

Yesterday was my birthday.

I got to eat cake and open up presents.

Our neighbors forgot to water our plants when we went on vacation.

When we came back from our vacation, all of our plants had died.

Name: \_\_\_\_\_ Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## Cause and Effect Comic Strip

*Directions: Finish the following two comic strips to complete their stories. Provide a description of what is happening. Label the cause and the effect.*

|   |  |  |
|---|--|--|
|  |  |  |
|---|--|--|

Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

|  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
|  |  |  |
|--|--|---|

Description: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Pictures: <http://www.living-intentionally.com/wp-content/uploads/2011/02/oversleep>  
<http://www.onlygowns.com/blog/your-wedding>

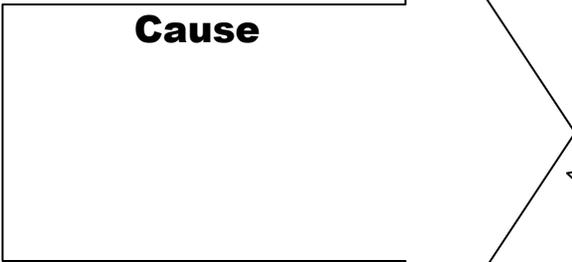
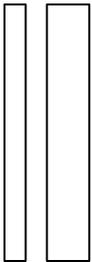
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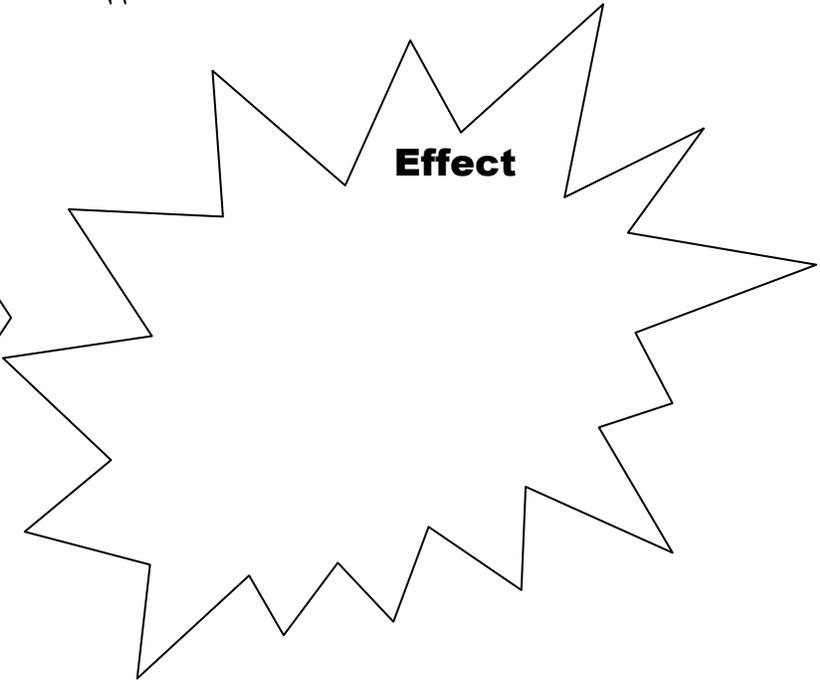
# MOVIE CLIPS

*Cause and Effect*

1. \_\_\_\_\_

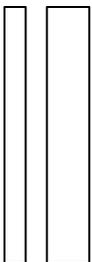


**Cause**

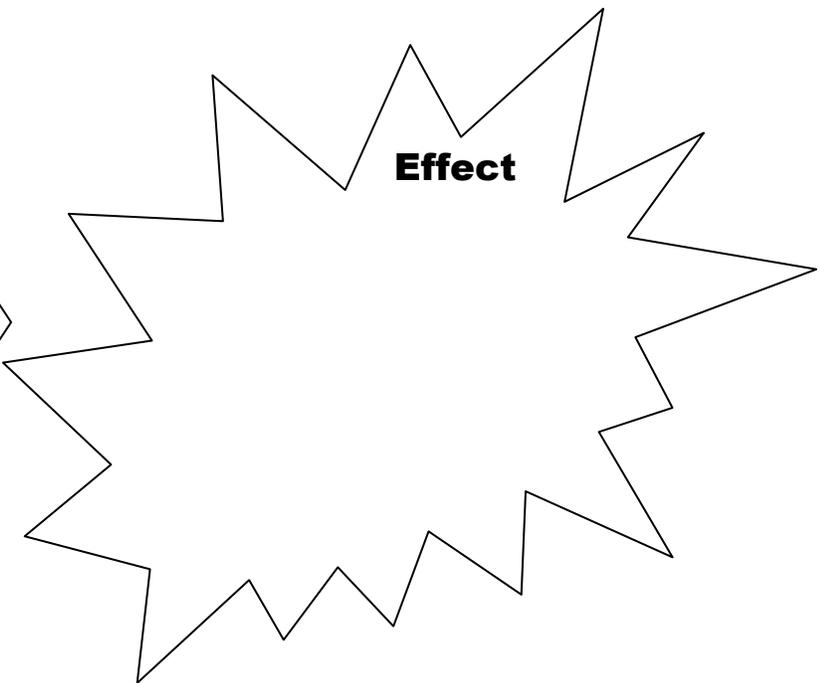


**Effect**

2. \_\_\_\_\_



**Cause**

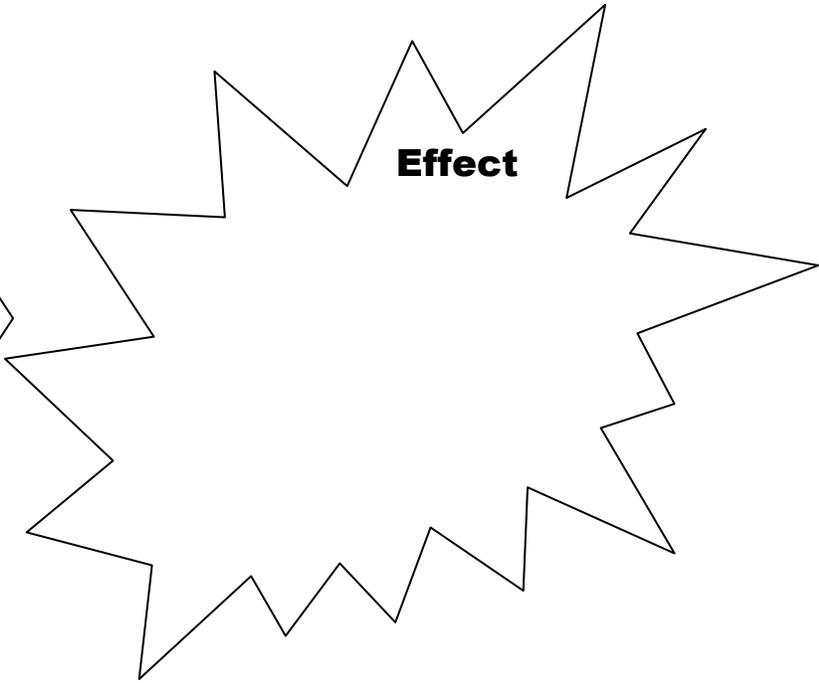
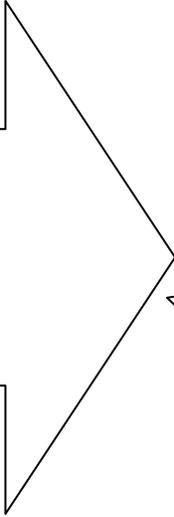


**Effect**

3. \_\_\_\_\_

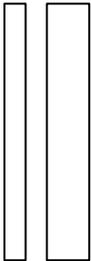


**Cause**

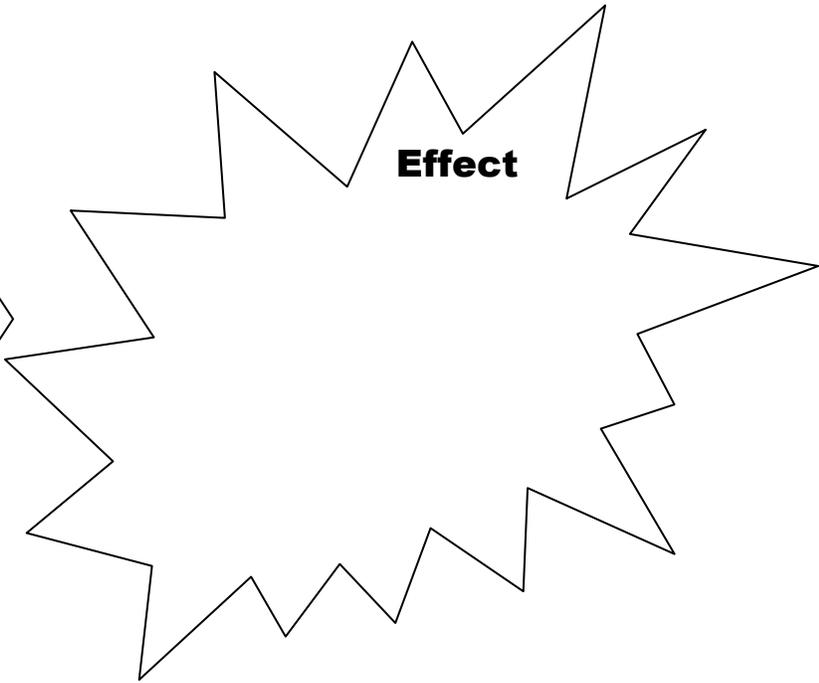
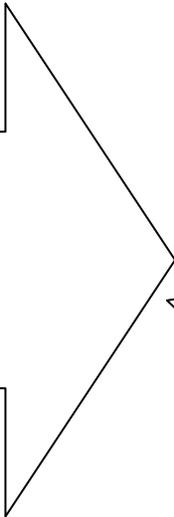


**Effect**

4. \_\_\_\_\_



**Cause**



**Effect**

### Scenario #1

Brad woke up late today. The electricity went out the night before, which caused his alarm to not go off at the right time. As Brad was getting dressed, his belt broke. He also noticed there was a small stain on the front of his shirt. He didn't have time to fix either of the problems.

Since Brad had slept through his alarm, the bus had left without him and he was forced to ride his bike to school. Luckily, he was able to jump into his first period seat right when the bell rang. As he began to ask the girl in the desk next to him for a pencil, his teacher reprimanded him for not having the warm-up for that day's class finished. She then noticed that his shirt was untucked. The teacher began to fill out a referral for Brad not following dress-code. Seeing this, Brad pushed back his chair and stormed out of the classroom.

#### *Questions:*

1. Did Brad respond reactively or proactively? Explain.
2. What might be the effects of his behavior?
3. How else could Brad have responded? What would be the effects of this response?

### Scenario #2

Your reading teacher assigns a project a month in advance so you have plenty of time to finish it and do a good job; however, you wait until the weekend before it is due to even begin. Your parents also happen to come up with the idea of going camping that weekend. Although they read a letter from your teacher about the project assignment, they assume that your project is already done and you don't remind them of the assignment.

Sunday night rolls around and you feel a huge sense of panic. You are staring at a blank computer screen and feeling unable to ask for help.

#### *Questions:*

1. Did you respond proactively in this situation? Explain.
2. What might be the effects of these decisions?
3. How else might you have responded? What would be the effects of this response?

### Scenario #3

Sarah has known her good friend, Beth, since they were in kindergarten. They've been on the same sports teams and in the same classes and shared lots of memories together. Since they've moved to middle school though, something has seemed to happen. Beth is eating lunch with a new group of girls and won't answer any of Sarah's text messages.

Feeling hurt and lonely, Sarah decides to go right up to Beth and ask what is wrong. Although hesitant at first, Beth agrees to talk. Sarah discovers that another one of their friends has been telling Beth that Sarah talks behind her back—gossip that simply isn't true.

#### *Questions:*

1. Did Sarah respond reactively or proactively in this situation? Explain.
2. What might be the effects of Sarah's decision to behave this way?
3. How else might she have responded? What would be the effects of this response?

### Scenario #4

It's Kelly's birthday party and she's planned everything out so that it will be perfect. Her mom took her to order a specially iced cake and decorated the house in her favorite colors: pink and green. Kelly even made a playlist of her favorite songs on her iPod to play in the background.

When her mom goes to pick up the cake, however, Kelly finds out the bakery had written the wrong name. What is even worse, her younger brother drops Kelly's iPod, making it impossible to play her music.

Before everyone arrives, Kelly uses a knife to spread the icing into a unique design. She turns on the radio to her favorite station and still has a great time at her party.

#### *Questions:*

1. Did Kelly respond reactively or proactively in this situation? Explain.
2. What might be the effects of Kelly's behavior?
3. How else might she have responded? What would be the effects of this response?

### Scenario #5

Jonathan has spent the last week trying out for his high school's basketball team. It has been a long, intensive week, and by Friday his body is downright tired. Jonathan has always made the "A" team when it comes to basketball, and he knows it is something his dad is really proud of (in fact, it seems like the only thing his dad ever talks about).

The coaches post the JV and varsity listings at the end of try-outs on Friday. Nervous, Jonathan approaches the bulletin board and finds out he has made the JV team. Angry about disappointing his father, Jonathan rips the paper off the board and refuses to play at all.

#### *Questions:*

1. Did Jonathan respond reactively or proactively? Explain.
2. What might be the effects of Jonathan's behavior?
3. How else could Jonathan have reacted? What would be the effects of this response?

### Scenario #6

Meghan's mom is taking her to the mall to get new clothes before school starts. As they turn onto the highway, a red car speeds up and rides their bumper. Even when Meghan and her mom reach the normal speed of the road, the red car continues to tailgate. Meghan's mom shifts over to the left lane, trying to allow the car to pass. As the car passes, a man looks out the window, giving Meghan and her mom a dirty look.

Meghan is shocked at how the man was treating them on the road. "You should follow him now," she says.

"Not worth my time," her mother replies. "Some people always seem to be in a rush. Sometimes you just need to make sure you're safe and let the other guy be in a bad mood."

#### *Questions:*

1. Did Meghan's mom respond reactively or proactively? Explain.
2. What might be the effects of her mom's decision?
3. How else could Meghan's mom reacted? What would be the effects of this response?



## Peer Conference Sheet



Writer's name: \_\_\_\_\_

Reader's name: \_\_\_\_\_

| <b>Editor's Checklist</b>  |          |          |                   |
|--|----------|----------|-------------------|
| <b>Question:</b>   | <b>Y</b> | <b>N</b> | <b>Questions?</b> |
| 1. Does the essay have a title?  |          |          |                   |
| 2. Does the introduction hook you in?                                  |          |          |                   |
| 3. Is there a clearly stated thesis?                                   |          |          |                   |
| 4. Does the essay focus on <b>only causes</b> or <b>only effects</b> ? |          |          |                   |
| 5. Does the essay give advice on how to behave proactively?            |          |          |                   |
| 6. Does each paragraph focus on only one major idea?                   |          |          |                   |

**Write three things you liked about the essay:**

|  |
|--|
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> |
|--|

**Write three suggestions, questions you have, or things that were unclear:**

|  |
|--|
| <br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br><br> |
|--|

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Period: \_\_\_\_\_

## **Cause and Effect**

### *Final Reflection*

**What are causes and effects?**

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**How do our choices affect our lives?**

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**How can we learn to respond proactively?**

|  |
|--|
|  |
|--|

**What areas of your life can be improved by responding proactively? Explain your answer.**

|  |
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|  |
|--|