

Structuring a Cause-and-Effect Essay

A cause-and-effect analysis is any event, experience, or occurrence for which you want to examine the causes and/or effects. The essay explains the cause and effect and examines the connections between them. A cause refers to actions or circumstances that lead to a result or consequence. An effect means the result or consequence. There are several steps that will help you write an effective cause-and-effect essay.

1. Establish your direction

Decide whether you want to talk about causes, effects, or analyze both.

2. Present a clear thesis

Thesis should inform reader of your purpose or intention. Thesis may focus on causes, effects, or both.

3. Follow an organizational pattern

There are two basic ways to organize a cause-and-effect essay: chronological (time) order and emphatic order. Chronological order discusses the causes and effects in the order that they occur. Emphatic order reserves the strongest or most significant cause and/or effect until the end.

4. Use transitions

Transitional words help the reader follow your cause-and-effect analysis.

5. Draw a conclusion

Restate the thesis and reach a conclusion concerning the causes and/or effects.

Cause-and-Effect Sample

Following below, the cause and effect essay combines both chronological and emphatic order. The details are constructed in a logical order, and the most significant effect (Santa giving pause to wars) is listed in the final paragraphs. **Note** the thesis statement which indicates the cause and effect pattern and the clear topic. You should also note the bold italicized transitions and key words that indicate the pattern of organization.

The Santa Effect

Long ago, a name was mispronounced by a group of English settlers in New Amsterdam, now known as New York. The Dutch name Sinterklass, a form of Sint Nicolaas, originally Saint Nicholas, became known as Santa Claus. ***The result of that historic mistake was a legend, and the “Santa Effect” continues to grow every year.***

Santa Claus began as a Dutch folktale based on a historical figure, a bishop who used his inheritance to help the needy and the sick. According to legend, a man lost his fortune, and the loss doomed his three daughters to a life of prostitution because he could no longer provide a dowry for them. Saint Nicholas anonymously gave the man enough gold for his daughters to keep their virtue and marry. When the bishop performed his

good deed, he was supposedly dressed in a bright red cloak and matching triangular bishop's hat. He wore soft white gloves because the weather was cold. Dutch folklore kept the generous figure in the traditional red suit but adopted furry white trim when storytellers enhanced their version of the story. Later accounts of the tale gave the iconic appearance twinkling eyes and a sleigh for travel.

Worldwide reports of the generous figure spread as each culture tried to capture the spirit of Santa in fresh fairy tales, often adding heart-touching accounts of Christmas miracles. **Therefore**, as the Santa legends grew, many cultures incorporated his story into their lives as a special season, a time for good will. It is believed that **because** St. Nicholas died on December 6th, the season was celebrated during that month, and still is. *Thus* Santa's story became a precursor to Christmas trees, stockings, letters, reindeer, "Ho, Ho's," gifts, carols, cards, and lights.

As a result of the legends, Santa also became the subject of books, editorials, movies, cartoons, shows, plays, and songs. Santa's legend gave birth to such titles as: *A Charlie Brown Christmas*, *A Christmas Carol* (novel, movies, & cartoon), *A Christmas Story*, *Frosty the Snowman*, *How the Grinch Stole Christmas*, *It's a Wonderful Life*, *Jingle All the Way*, *Santa Clause is coming to Town*, *Miracle on 34th Street*, *National Lampoons' Christmas Vacation*, *Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer*, and *The Nutcracker*, just to name a few. And who can forget the famous newspaper editorial, "Yes, Virginia, there is a Santa Claus?"

Consequently, over 96% of Americans celebrate Christmas, whether they are Christian or not. In 2004, in the United Kingdom, Parliament enacted the Christmas Day Trading Act to prevent shops over 3,000 square feet from opening on Christmas Day. The act applies to both England and Wales. Santa has **affected** economies, customs, arts, and media in many countries all over the world. Santa has even given pause to wars.

Long ago, when a name was mispronounced by a group of English settlers in New Amsterdam, they did not know that it was the beginning of a phenomenon. The Dutch Sinterklass became Santa Claus, and the **result** was a legend that will continue to **affect** mankind for ages to come.

--Josephine Lewis