


Jan Richardson: How to teach Cause-and-Effect Relationships

“Teach students how to search for cause-and-effect relationships that are stated or implied in the text. Model the process you use to think of a cause or effect question. Locate an effect in the text and turn it into a question.” * Jan Richardson, pg. 225, *The Next Step in Guided Reading*.

Cause - Effect



Find a fact (effect) from the book.
Turn it into a question by thinking...

What caused _____ ?
Why did _____ ?
What would have happened if?

*Text selection: Most historical and scientific texts are ideal for teaching this strategy, but it is always important to read the text to ensure it contains cause-and-effect relationships. See page 225 in *The Next Step..* for a passage example from “War: What happens when nations don’t work it out?” (Harvey & Goudvis, 2007)

Literal Level: Students find a cause-and-effect relationship stated in the text.

Step 1: The teacher flags the effect.

- Before students read, insert sticky flags directly on sentences that contain the effect.
- Whenever students come to a sticky flag, they must write a “What caused....” question using the effect flagged in the text.
- After they write the question, they should write the answer -which is the cause, and is in the book.
- Students continue to read the entire section, preparing for the discussion.
- During last five minutes of the lesson, students take turns asking their “What caused...” questions, calling on group members to answer. Thumbs up if they remember, otherwise look back in the text and find the answer.

Step 2: The teacher flags the paragraph that contains a cause/effect relationship

- Before students read, insert sticky flags directly in the margin of a paragraph that contains a cause-and-effect relationship.
- Enrich the discussion by flagging different paragraphs for each student.

- Students read the whole passage but on the flagged paragraph, they know to read for a cause –and-effect relationship.
- Model, tell them to read each sentence carefully in ‘their’ paragraph and determine if they can ask a “What caused...” question from that sentence.
- Write the questions in their notebooks. During discussion time, students take turns asking their question and calling on others to respond.

Step 3: The teacher flags a page that contains a cause/effect relationship

- Flag a different page for each student (but students read the selection) and tell students they must write a “What caused...” question for the page that is flagged.
- They read each sentence critically to decide if it can be turned into a “What caused..”?
- As before, students take turns asking their question during the last 5 minute discussion.

Interpretive Level: Students find a cause-and-effect relationship implied in the text.

Step 1: Students make connections to prior knowledge to find a cause-and -effect relationship that is not clearly stated but needs to be inferred.

- Turn an effect into a question that is not directly answered in the text, but inferred. See page 227 in *The Next Step...*for text example (war passage)
- Flag a specific paragraph for each student
- Students write a “What caused....” question not answered in the text but implied using their background knowledge
- As before, students take turns asking their question during the last 5 minute discussion.

Evaluative Level: Students share cause-and-effect relationships and determine whether they are literal (in the book) or inferred (in one’s head).

Step 1: Students understand how to identify cause-and –effect relationships and now record on a three column chart.

- This is the most challenging level. Prompt and scaffold students by modeling the chart.
- During the discussion students turn their cause/effect relationship into a question for peers. Discuss whether the answer was in the book or their head.

Cause	Effect	In the book or In my head