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Text Structure: Cause and Effect

Science writing usually presents relationships between events or ideas. Events can show **cause-and-effect** relationships, in which one event brings about, or causes, the other. The event that happens first is the cause; the one that follows is the effect.

Read the following passage and answer the questions.

The Great Dust Bowl

During the 1930s, a terrible environmental disaster struck the American Great Plains. This catastrophe, known as the Dust Bowl, turned once-fertile farmland into a wasteland and forced thousands of families to abandon their homes.

Several factors caused this devastating event. For years, farmers had plowed deeply into the soil to grow wheat, removing the native grasses that held the soil in place. When a severe drought hit the region in 1931, the unprotected topsoil dried out completely. With no moisture or plant roots to hold it down, the dirt was easily picked up by strong winds that frequently swept across the plains.

As a result, massive dust storms called "black blizzards" developed. These storms carried away millions of tons of soil, creating drifts like snow against houses and barns. The effects were catastrophic. Livestock died

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from inhaling dust, and many people developed "dust pneumonia," a serious respiratory illness. Crops failed completely, leaving farmers with no income and no food to eat.

Because of these harsh conditions, more than 2.5 million people migrated from the Dust Bowl states to other parts of America, especially California. This mass exodus, one of the largest migrations in American history, changed the population and culture of the western United States forever.

1. What was the main cause of the Dust Bowl, and what were two contributing factors?

2. Identify two effects of the dust storms on people living in the Great Plains.

3. How does the author organize this passage to show relationships between events?

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Text Structure: Cause and Effect - Answer Key

1. What was the main cause of the Dust Bowl, and what were two contributing factors?

The main cause was the severe drought in 1931.

Contributing factors were farmers' deep plowing that removed native grasses and the strong winds across the plains.

2. Identify two effects of the dust storms on people living in the Great Plains.

People developed "dust pneumonia," a serious respiratory illness, and 2.5 million people migrated from the Dust Bowl states to other parts of America.

3. How does the author organize this passage to show relationships between events?

The author uses cause and effect structure, showing how farming practices and drought caused soil to dry out, leading to dust storms, which caused health problems and crop failures, resulting in mass migration.