

## WRITING DEVELOPMENT

**RULE #1: If anything I say on this page conflicts with what your teachers have told you, I am wrong, and they are right.**

### The California Gold Rush of 1849-55

#### 11. Explaining I – simple explanations

EVERY answer you write should include an element of explanation – explaining HOW what you are writing is actually answering the question.

When you addressed the subordinating conjunctions ('because', 'so', 'so that', 'which caused', 'which led', 'as a result') you found it easy to identify the effect of a cause, or a cause for an effect. But what makes explanation in an exam answer so difficult is that you have to link a *specific* cause to a *specified* effect, and that is cognitively harder, and many students struggle to do so effectively.

**NOTE: the sections that follow say nothing about providing facts or examples in your answer; we will deal with that in the next Writing Development exercise #12.**

Let's take the question:

"Explain a problem faced by the first gold miners."

So let's say you choose the problem: 'lawlessness in the gold-mining towns'. Now you need to **explain how** those things were a problem for the miners, thus:

(a) LAWLESSNESS IN THE GOLD-MINING TOWNS	EXPLANATION OF → <b>HOW</b> → THIS WAS A PROBLEM	= BAD EFFECTS ON THE GOLD MINERS
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I am going to call this sequence of explaining how, from the cause to the effect, an 'explanation pathway'.

1. Consider this answer:

"One problem was that mining towns grew up rapidly from the original mining camps with no organised system of government or law and order. As a result, the miners found themselves often swindled and lured into whiskey, women and "mad carousals", gold and claims were stolen, and they might be beaten up or even lynched."

Identify the sentence which gives the explanation of how the lawlessness was a problem for the gold miners, and underline the subordinating conjunction which signals it.

2. Use the following sentence stems to write good 'as a result' sentences explaining **how** each of the following was a problem for the miners/ how it had a bad effect on them:

- <They bankrupted themselves getting there.> As a result \_\_\_\_\_.
- <The work was back-breaking.> As a result \_\_\_\_\_.
- <They lived rough.> As a result \_\_\_\_\_.
- <There were no women in the mining towns.> As a result \_\_\_\_\_.
- <There were racial tensions.> As a result \_\_\_\_\_.