

Alphonse the Camel

Was it the straw that broke the camel's back? Read the story that follows and produce a reasoned analysis of the causes of Alphonse's death making use of as many cause categories as possible.

Directions:

1. Read through the story & highlight all the causes of Alphonse's death.
2. List the causes of Alphonse's death and the effects of each cause next to it.
3. Determine the most important causes by asking 'what if' for each cause.
4. Create the 'causation diamond' to determine the most important cause of his death.



Once upon a time there was a camel (called Alphonse). For various reasons (relating to an unfortunate accident during his birth) the camel had severe back problems. This was not the end of his misfortune, however, because he had an evil exploitative owner (called Frank the Camel Killer) who regularly overloaded his camels prior to taking them on gruelling and totally unnecessary round trips up and down mountains on his way to deliver goods to his customers. These customers, shockingly, were completely indifferent to these frequent and gross violations of the rights of camels and found Frank and his antics at least vaguely endearing.

Well, one Friday, Frank had just finished loading-up Alphonse and his poor exploited fellow creatures for yet another gruelling and totally unnecessary round trip up and down the mountains. He had piled and piled and piled up the goods onto Alphonse's back and was taking a break and reflecting smugly on his handiwork, chewing a straw. On a whim he decided to add the bedraggled straw he had been chewing to Alphonse's load. Alphonse groaned obligingly. He eyed his owner with disgust. He keeled over and died of radical and irreversible back collapse.

Read the following story and determine which causes immediately caused John’s death and which were underlying factors.

Just before midnight one dark and stormy night, a man called John Smith, an engine mechanic, was sitting in an isolated cabin in the woods. As he reached for a cigarette, he noticed he had only one left. Glancing at his watch, he realized that he had just enough time to hop in his car, and drive to the gas station down the road to buy cigarettes before it closed. As his car pulled out of his driveway and onto the highway, it was hit by his neighbour, who, returning from a long night of drinking, was unable to stop his car soon enough on the icy road. Smith was killed instantly. Later, as the townspeople were discussing the sad event, they shook their heads one after another and said, “We always knew that smoking would kill Smith.” It is worth noting that local officials had long been warned of the dangers of that part of the highway, especially in winter, and yet they seemed uninterested in doing anything about it. Apparently because the residents of that part of the town did not have any influence with local authorities. Others wondered if the liquor laws had been more faithfully enforced in the town whether the neighbour who smashed into Smith would have been as drunk as he was.

Immediate Cause	Underlying Factor