



## Who'll Stop the...Snow?

### Teacher's Guide to Student Handout #1: **Post Hoc Fallacy Examples**

1. Post hoc fallacy. The writer implies some causal connection between forwarding a letter and being hit by a bus. But there is no evidence that the events are causally connected.
2. This one may or may not be a fallacy. It's possible that installing Word caused some other program to malfunction, and it's actually that other program that is causing the computer to crash. But it's also possible that the problem is with Word. We would need more information to know for sure.
3. Post hoc fallacy. There is nothing "magical" about grandfather's touch. It's possible, though, that grandfather's hitting the TV is a partial cause (perhaps there is a short in the wiring and jolting the TV reconnects the circuit).
4. Post hoc fallacy. The snow may have played some role in Pete's decision to go get milk (he might, for instance, have worried about getting snowed in). But there is no evidence that the snow made Pete thirsty.
5. Post hoc fallacy. There is no evidence that the laces are causing Janet to run faster. There might be some psychological effect (something like Dumbo's belief that his feather allowed him to fly). But in that case, the laces aren't causing the performance: it's a *belief* in the laces that is doing the causal work.
6. Probably a post hoc fallacy. Economies are extremely complex. It's unlikely that any one particular policy will singlehandedly cause an economic downturn.
7. Post hoc fallacy. Warts often will go away on their own. There is no evidence that the potato had anything to do with the wart going away.
8. Possibly a post hoc fallacy. Drinking three glasses of wine might very well cause some people to get sick. But it's also possible that the person had food poisoning – or that the person simply ate too much at dinner. We would need more information to know whether or not this is a fallacy.
9. Post hoc fallacy. People who cram for tests tend to get poor grades because they are also likely not to have done much work prior to the night before the test. It's not the cramming that leads to poor test scores: it's the lack of preparation beforehand.
10. Post hoc fallacy. Clearly the Twinkies aren't actually responsible for causing BillyBob to rob banks. Interestingly, though, the so-called Twinkie defense was successful. Attorneys for Dan White argued that his sugar high (the result of consuming large quantities of Twinkies and Coca-Cola) diminished his capacity to premeditate his acts. As a result, White was convicted of manslaughter rather than first degree murder.