



TEACHER GUIDE

GRADES 6-8

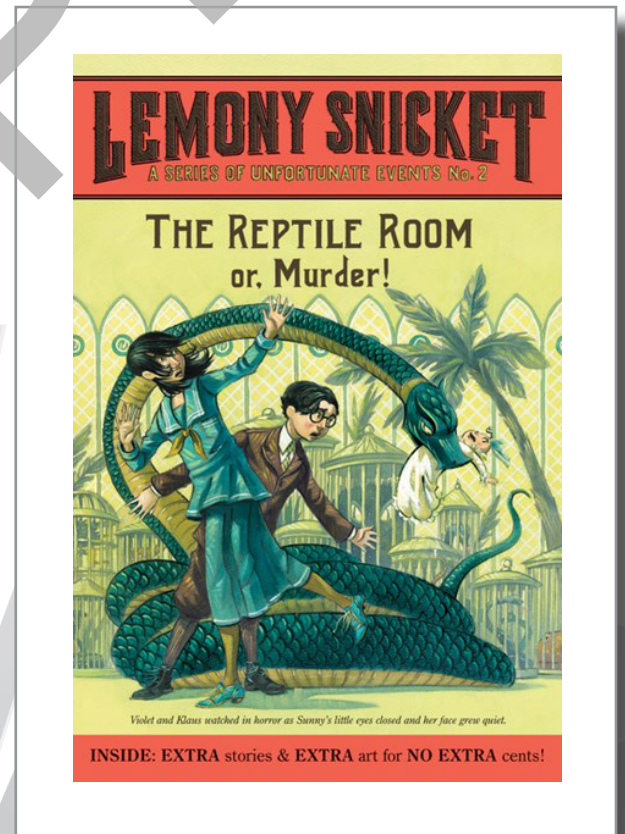
COMPREHENSIVE CURRICULUM BASED LESSON PLANS

A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning

Lemony Snicket

A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Reptile Room

Lemony Snicket



READ, WRITE, THINK, DISCUSS AND CONNECT

A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Bad Beginning

A Series of Unfortunate Events: The Reptile Room

Lemony Snicket

The trade book edition of the novel used to prepare this guide is found in the Novel Units catalog and on the Novel Units website. Using other editions may have varied page references.

Please note: We have assigned Interest Levels based on our knowledge of the themes and ideas of the books included in the Novel Units sets, however, please assess the appropriateness of this novel or trade book for the age level and maturity of your students prior to reading with them. You know your students best!

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Skills and Strategies

Thinking

Research, compare/contrast,
pros/cons, brainstorming,
critical thinking, decision-
making, predicting

Comprehension

Cause/effect, analysis,
evaluation

Writing

Poetry, eulogy, letters, essays,
summaries, dramatic scenes

Listening/Speaking

Dramatic reading, acting,
oral presentation, discussion

Vocabulary

Synonyms/antonyms,
definitions, parts of speech

Literary Elements

Setting, tone, conflict, point
of view, characterization,
theme, irony, symbolism

Across the Curriculum

Art—sketch, caricatures,
drama; Geography—map
reading; Music—song lyrics;
Health/Science—fire safety,
herpetology

Genre: young-adult fiction

Setting: the city where the three children are orphaned; a home just outside the city down Lousy Lane

Point of View: third-person omniscient

Themes: survival, good vs. evil, justice, courage, family

Conflict: person vs. person, person vs. society

Tone: candid, honest, suspenseful

Summary

In *The Bad Beginning*, the Baudelaire children learn from their parents' well-intentioned attorney, Mr. Poe, that a fire has killed both of their parents and destroyed their home. Mr. Poe places the three orphans—Violet, age 14; Klaus, age 12; and Sunny, age 1—in the care of a distant relative, Count Olaf. Count Olaf treats the children very poorly and devises a scheme to marry Violet in order to steal their inheritance. His attempt to steal the money is foiled by the intelligence of Violet and Klaus, but Olaf escapes before the authorities can catch him.

In *The Reptile Room*, Mr. Poe delivers Violet, Klaus, and Sunny to another distant relative, Montgomery Montgomery (Uncle Monty), who is a world-renowned herpetologist. Uncle Monty treats the children well, and they enjoy living with him until Stephano, Uncle Monty's new assistant, arrives. The children know immediately that Stephano is the disguised Count Olaf but are unable to convince Uncle Monty of this truth because of Stephano's threats to injure them. Stephano kills Uncle Monty, but before he can escape with the children, they run into Mr. Poe who is eventually convinced of Stephano's true identity. The children are rescued from Count Olaf, but Count Olaf again escapes the authorities.

About the Author

Daniel Handler, the man behind the persona of Lemony Snicket, was born in San Francisco on February 28, 1970. He was raised by Jewish parents and graduated from Wesleyan University in 1992. His first novel, *The Basic Eight*, was rejected 37 times before it was published. His first children's series, *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, will end with the publication of the thirteenth book. Handler currently lives in San Francisco with his wife, Lisa Brown, who is an illustrator.

Characters

Violet Baudelaire: 14-year-old sister to Klaus and Sunny; enjoys engineering new inventions

Klaus Baudelaire: 12-year-old brother to Violet and Sunny; intelligent; avid reader

Sunny Baudelaire: infant sister to Violet and Klaus; likes to bite objects

Mr. Poe: executor of the Baudelaire estate; responsible for the welfare of the Baudelaire orphans; well-intentioned but blind to Count Olaf's treachery

Count Olaf (aka Stephano): relative who lives closest to the Baudelaire children and their first legal guardian; an actor in charge of a theater troupe; abuses the children and plots to steal their inheritance; disguises himself as Stephano in *The Reptile Room*

Justice Strauss: Count Olaf's neighbor; a judge in the city; kind to the Baudelaire children

Montgomery Montgomery (aka Uncle Monty): distant relative of the Baudelaire orphans who lives outside the city in which they grew up; a herpetologist; kind to the children; is deceived and murdered by Count Olaf masquerading as Stephano

Dr. Lucafont: one of Count Olaf's assistants with hooks for hands; disguises himself as a doctor and helps Count Olaf escape after Olaf kills Uncle Monty in *The Reptile Room*

Count Olaf's Troupe: a group of people devoted to Count Olaf, including the hook-handed man, two white-faced women, a large person with an indistinct gender, and a bald man with a long nose

Bruce: chubby man in charge of the group from the Herpetological Society that comes to remove and redistribute Uncle Monty's reptile collection after his death

Initiating Activities

1. **Prediction:** Have students research Lemony Snicket's official Web site (www.lemonysnicket.com—active at the printing of this guide). Give students the following instructions: Without reading specifically about the book series, predict what you think will happen in the first two books of the series, and whether or not you think you will enjoy reading them and why.
2. **Research:** Have students research what it means to be a child's "legal guardian."
3. **Brainstorming:** Place the word "unfortunate" in the center of the Attribute Web (see p. 6 of this guide). Allow students to brainstorm a list of meanings for this word and speculate on how it relates to the books.
4. **Prereading/Research/Prediction:** Read a review of the movie, *A Series of Unfortunate Events* (2004). Have students predict whether they think the movie accurately or inaccurately depicts the plot, theme, and message of the Lemony Snicket books.
5. **Prediction:** Select one paragraph at random from the beginning, middle, and end of each book. Read these paragraphs to the students. Based on these six paragraphs, have students predict the plot of both books. Students may use the Prediction Chart (see pp. 7–8 of this guide) for this activity and all following predictions.

Character Web

Directions: Complete the attribute web below by filling in information specific to a character in the books.

A central circle labeled "Name" is connected by lines to five surrounding circles. The circles are labeled: "His/her statements" (top), "His/her thoughts" (top-left), "His/her behavior" (top-right), "Others' statements about him/her" (bottom-left), and "Others' behavior toward him/her" (bottom-right). Each of these five outer circles contains four horizontal lines for writing. A sixth circle, labeled "Others' statements toward him/her", is positioned at the bottom and is also connected to the central circle. This circle contains four horizontal lines for writing. A large, light gray "SAMPLE" watermark is oriented diagonally across the entire diagram.

His/her statements

His/her thoughts

His/her behavior

Others' statements about him/her

Others' behavior toward him/her

Others' statements toward him/her

Name

The Reptile Room: Chapters Twelve–Thirteen, pp. 165–190

Violet presents her evidence to Mr. Poe and the other adults, proving that Stephano indeed injected Monty with the Mamba du Mal poison. She also proves his intent was to take the children to Peru, disguised as Uncle Monty since he no longer had a ticket. After Violet proves that Stephano is Count Olaf, Count Olaf escapes with Dr. Lucafont, whom they discover is actually Olaf's hook-handed assistant. The two deviants get away, and the children fall asleep, only to wake up and find that members of the Herpetological Society are removing Uncle Monty's reptile collection. Disturbed by this, they say a last goodbye to their reptile friends.

Vocabulary

perpetuate (166)
laminated (171)
treachery (176)
lampoon (186)
dismantle (189)

Discussion Questions

1. Why is Klaus' knowledge about the Mamba du Mal not enough to convince Mr. Poe of the truth? (*While Klaus discovered that the snake would have killed Uncle Monty by strangling him, it is still feasible that the snake simply acted in an abnormal manner. The snake bite marks and the venom in his blood still prove a snake killed him. The only way to convince the adults of the truth is to provide another viable solution—which is why Violet's discovery of the syringe and vial are important. This gives an alternate explanation for why Uncle Monty is pale and not bruised. pp. 169–173*)
2. How does Mr. Poe handle his newfound knowledge that Stephano is Count Olaf and that he has killed both Uncle Monty and Gustav? Evaluate the decisions he makes. (*He decides Olaf must be driven to the police station and agrees that Olaf can ride in Dr. Lucafont's car while he follows behind with the children. As is later revealed, Dr. Lucafont is Olaf's assistant and is helping Olaf escape. Answers will vary. pp. 176–180*)
3. On pages 187–188, the children feel that everything seems wrong—from the way Bruce perceives Uncle Monty to Mr. Poe's assumptions that the children will never again want to see a snake. While everyone can mistake what the children know and feel, what can other people not change about the children? Explain. (*The children will always think of Uncle Monty and their time with him as "brilliant"—both because Uncle Monty was intelligent and also because he was a bright spot in the midst of their very unfortunate lives. While no one else may remember who he truly was, the children can keep their memories of him intact. Answers will vary. pp. 187–189*)
4. **Prediction:** What do you think will happen to the Baudelaires in their next home?

Supplementary Activities

1. **Critical Thinking:** Pretend that Stephano is on trial for deceiving Uncle Monty with a false identity and murdering him. Assign students to be the prosecuting attorney, defense attorney, Stephano, Mr. Poe, Violet, Klaus, Sunny, Dr. Lucafont, and a judge. The lawyers should examine and cross-examine each witness. The rest of the class will serve as the jury and vote on whether Stephano is guilty or innocent on both charges. The jury must rule based only on what they hear from the witnesses and not on what they have read in the book. (*Attorneys may see pages 167–174 for reference of the events that actually occurred.*)
2. **Writing/Oral Presentation:** Pretend you are Violet, and write a eulogy that you will give at Dr. Montgomery's memorial service. Then present your eulogy to the class.