



Meredith Heuer

## AUTHOR BIOGRAPHY:

The dismal drizzle that surrounded the hospital where Lemony Snicket was born turned out to be a sign of the way his life would go. His extended family, if they were alive, would describe him as a distinguished scholar, an amateur connoisseur and an outright gentleman. Unfortunately this description has been challenged of late, but HarperCollins continues to support his research and writing on the lives of the Baudelaire orphans.

## SUGGESTED READING LIST:

Any other book in the world would be more pleasant to read than A Series of Unfortunate Events. Below is an abbreviated list.



**By William J. Brooke**

*A Is for AARRGH!*

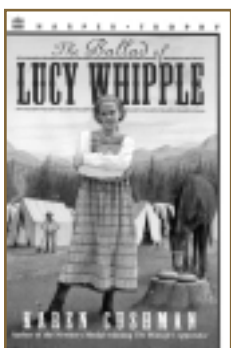


**By Diana Wynne Jones**

*Charmed Life*

*Witch Week*

*The Spellcoats*

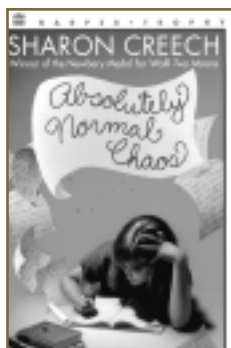


**By Karen Cushman**

*The Ballad of Lucy Whipple*

*Catherine Called Birdy*

*The Midwife's Apprentice*




**By Sharon Creech**

*Absolutely Normal Chaos*

*Pleasing the Ghost*

*Walk Two Moons*

Look for *A Series of Unfortunate Events* at your local bookstore or library. This reading group guide is available at bookstores everywhere, or call toll-free 1-800-242-7737 to order more (free of charge in packs of 10).

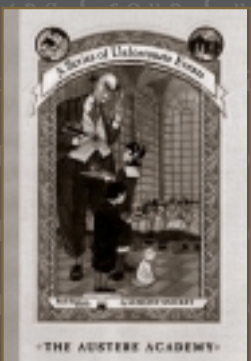
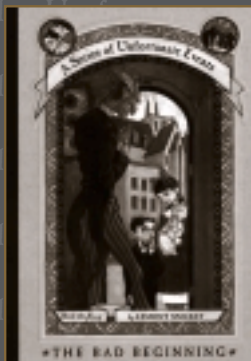
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A Series of Unfortunate Events

# Reading Group Guide

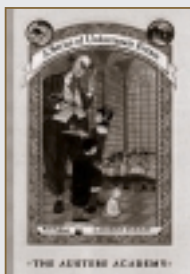


By Lemony Snicket

## ABOUT THIS GUIDE:

A Series of Unfortunate Events is the term HarperCollins uses to describe a sequence of books written by Lemony Snicket concerning the miserable plight of the three Baudelaire children at the hands of the sinister Count Olaf. It is a *New York Times* Best-selling series and has sold hundreds of thousands of copies in North America and will soon be appearing all over the world. This guide is a desperate attempt to stop this travesty before it is too late. The discussion topics, suggested reading list and author biography in this reading group guide are intended to guide the public toward books that are less dreadful and so to promote comfort and vitality rather than despair and anxiety in our large and unnerving world.

## ABOUT THESE BOOKS:



Violet, Klaus and Sunny Baudelaire are some of the most charming, clever and resourceful children one could hope to meet, but that is not enough. Violet, the eldest, is an inventor, but she has been unable to invent a device that could undo the terrible fire that claimed their parents' lives. Klaus is a very skilled researcher, but nothing he reads can save them from the treachery of the villainous Count Olaf. And even Sunny's four sharp teeth cannot bite through the chain of misfortune that encircles the children as they try to uncover Olaf's evil plans to steal the fortune the Baudelaire parents left behind.



## ABOUT THESE BOOKS (continued):

In Book the First, **THE BAD BEGINNING**, the Baudelaires first encounter Count Olaf, and barely escape his horrid attempt to marry Violet and secure the fortune for himself. In Book the Second, **THE REPTILE ROOM**, the Baudelaires are placed in the care of their Uncle Monty and his collection of reptiles, who accidentally help Olaf in his murderous plan. Aunt Josephine, the children's guardian in Book the Third, **THE WIDE WINDOW**, fares no better, and whether the children find themselves in a lumbermill (Book the Fourth, **THE MISERABLE MILL**), a boarding school (Book the Fifth, **THE AUSTERE ACADEMY**), or in a glamorous penthouse apartment (Book the Sixth, **THE ERSATZ ELEVATOR**), they seem unable to find a moment's peace from the enormous web of deception and despair that hangs over their lives. And so it goes. Perhaps when the Baudelaires solve the mystery that lies behind Olaf's treachery they can find a way to live out their lives in safety—but perhaps not, and why in the world should anyone read about each misfortune the children encounter in the meantime?

## CRITICAL ACCLAIM:

At the author's insistence, authorities are examining the following publications for possible corruption and/or dementia, which would explain the following quotes:

"Hilarious... Luckily for fans, the woes of the Baudelaires are far from over." —*Publishers Weekly* (Starred review)

"Wicked good fun." —*Kirkus Review* (Pointer review)

"This series promises to have a long, productive life."  
—*Christian Science Monitor*

## QUESTIONS FOR DISCUSSION:

1. In **THE BAD BEGINNING**, Mr. Snicket warns his readers, "If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book." Yet many people have insisted on continuing to read this book anyway. What is wrong with such people?
2. The theme of **THE REPTILE ROOM** might be best stated, "Look out for Count Olaf—he will try to murder you!" Why do you think there are so few books that deal with this theme?
3. In **THE WIDE WINDOW**, the character of Aunt Josephine is frightened of many things, and then a very frightening thing happens to her. Is it useful to feel fear, because it prepares you for nasty events, or is it useless, because nasty events will occur whether you are frightened or not?



4. **THE MISERABLE MILL** brings up many important issues of the day, including child labor in the lumber industry, hypnotism within the medical profession, gum-chewing, cigar-smoking, cross-dressing, and the futility of coupons, bankers and optimism. How does the treatment of these issues in Snicket's work differ from their treatment in the newspaper, on television and in musical theater?

5. Does anything in your life compare with the anguish the Baudelaire children encounter in **THE AUSTERE ACADEMY**? If so, how terrible for you. If not, how nice. Discuss.

6. In **THE ERSATZ ELEVATOR**, Violet, Klaus and Sunny encounter many things which are not what they seem. Yet **THE ERSATZ ELEVATOR** is what it seems—a book containing nothing but despair, discomfort and woe. Discuss.

7. Violet, the eldest Baudelaire child, often risks her life when using one of her inventions in a desperate attempt to escape Count Olaf's treachery. Is this a proper role model for young women?



8. Klaus, the middle Baudelaire child, often finds out disturbing information when researching Count Olaf's evil ways. Is this a proper role model for young men?

9. Sunny, the youngest Baudelaire child, occasionally uses her four sharp teeth in an aggressive manner, in order to defeat Count Olaf's dreadful behavior. Is this a proper role model for young babies?

10. Each of the books in *A Series of Unfortunate Events* is dedicated to Beatrice. When HarperCollins asked Mr. Snicket about this mysterious woman, he burst into tears and was unable to answer. Is this an appropriate author for young readers?

11. In each of Mr. Snicket's books, there is no evidence that Count Olaf has ever been captured by the appropriate authorities. Is this more terrifying than horrifying, or more horrifying than terrifying? Discuss.

12. If Count Olaf is still at large, isn't it risky to attract his attention by purchasing and reading any of Mr. Snicket's books? Discuss.

13. Who is standing behind you right now? Discuss.

