

Grades 3-5

A Series of Unfortunate Events



CLASSROOM



ACTIVITY KIT



Dear Brave Teacher,

If you have never heard of A Series of Unfortunate Events, consider yourself lucky. These books tell an unhappy tale about three very unlucky children, who despite being clever and charming, lead lives filled with misery and woe.

You may know teachers of questionable character who would not hesitate to recommend these books to their students. Do not follow their example! If your pupils enjoy cheerful stories with happy endings, they would be much better off reading some other books.

If these nefarious books find their way into your classroom, take heed. Proceed with extreme caution and definitely use this Series of Unfortunate Events Teacher's Activity Guide.

With all due respect,

*Lemony Snicket*

Lemony Snicket



# AWFUL ALTER EGOS

## *Rhyme and Alliteration*

Count Olaf and his crew often wear disguises and create aliases. Discuss the term *alias* with the class. Have students invent aliases of their own. They may choose to scramble up the letters in their names to make an anagram. For example, an anagram of the name Brian could be Nirba. Students may also use alliteration to confuse others. For example, Susan might call herself “Superstitious Susan.” Finally, students can create rhyming names for themselves, such as Sad Brad.



# YOU'RE A POET AND MAY NOT KNOW IT!

## *Language Arts*

Isadora and Duncan Quagmire are two of the Baudelaires' closest friends. Isadora is a poet. In *The Vile Village*, she uses a two-line form of poetry known as a couplet to give clues to the Baudelaires about where Count Olaf has hidden them.

Ask the children to write their own rhyming couplets with clues to a secret hiding place. Have them read their poems out loud so that the group can guess the hiding place each is describing.

Give them the following example to help get them started . . .

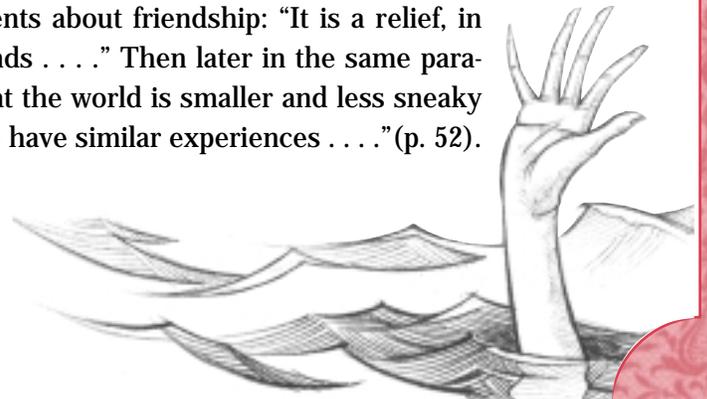
**Clothes are on their hangers, shoes are on the floor.  
It's a very small room, where you can shut the door.**

# TO THE RESCUE!

## *Language Arts*

In *The Austere Academy* Violet, Klaus, and Sunny make friends with the Quagmire triplets. Lemony Snicket makes these comments about friendship: “It is a relief, in hectic and frightening times, to find true friends . . .” Then later in the same paragraph he says, “Friends can make you feel that the world is smaller and less sneaky than it really is, because you know people who have similar experiences . . .” (p. 52).

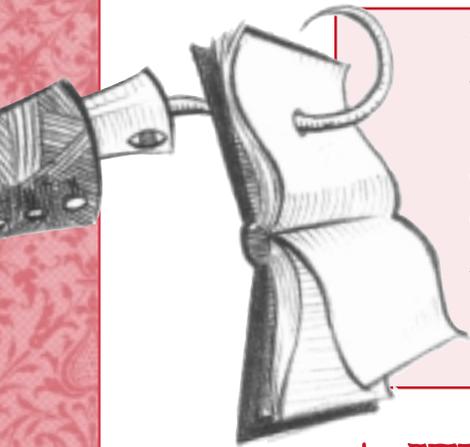
Have students write about a time in their lives when a friend came to the rescue. Students might prefer to write a letter to their friend expressing appreciation for their friendship.



# WHAT'S IN A NAME?

## *Literary Allusions, Anagrams, and Synonyms*

Many of the names of people and places that Lemony Snicket uses in *A Series of Unfortunate Events* have been chosen because they have a meaning behind them. Many are literary allusions, others are anagrams, and some employ synonyms for derogatory words to reinforce the presence of misfortune. Explain to students what these literary terms mean. Provide them with the list below of people and places from *A Series of Unfortunate Events* and see if they can deduce Lemony Snicket's reason for choosing them. Their research will take them to world leaders, famous authors, ancient places, and more. Have students search for other names in the books for many more examples.



### PEOPLE

Vice Principal Nero  
Esmé Squalor  
Georgina Orwell  
Coach Ghengis  
Al Funcoot  
Duncan and Isadora Quagmire

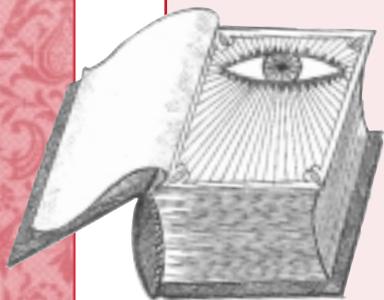
### PLACES

Damocles Dock  
Café Salmonella  
Lake Lachrymose  
Mulctuary Money Management  
Prufrock Preparatory School  
Veblen Hall  
Heimlich Hospital

# A WORD HERE MEANING . . .

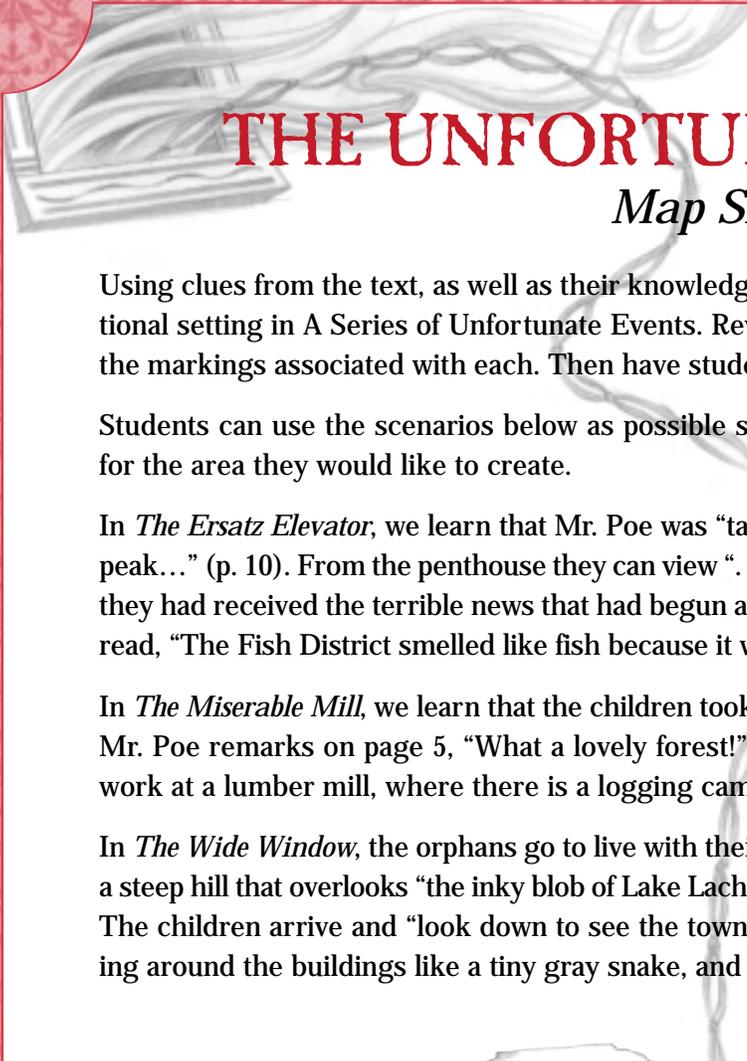
## *Vocabulary*

Lemony Snicket uses wonderfully sophisticated words in his writing. He helps the reader understand the meaning of these words by providing definitions. However, Lemony Snicket sometimes leaves readers to understand the meaning from the context of the story, which is the case with the following words.



<i>The Bad Beginning</i>	<b>nefarious</b> (pg. 118, ln. 9); <b>illegible</b> (pg. 124, ln. 22)
<i>The Reptile Room</i>	<b>lampoon</b> (pg. 186, ln. 3)
<i>The Wide Window</i>	<b>mute</b> (pg. 126, ln. 16)
<i>The Miserable Mill</i>	<b>atrocious</b> (pg. 19, ln. 21)
<i>The Austere Academy</i>	<b>obsession</b> (pg. 101, ln. 4); <b>treacherous</b> (pg. 108, ln. 7)
<i>The Ersatz Elevator</i>	<b>muffled</b> (pg. 57, ln. 1); <b>enormous</b> (pg. 186, ln. 20)
<i>The Vile Village</i>	<b>immense</b> (pg. 105, ln. 12)
<i>The Hostile Hospital</i>	<b>soothed</b> (pg. 51, ln. 3 & 7); <b>dismay</b> (pg. 85, ln. 9)

Ask students to define these words the way Lemony Snicket would, reflecting his voice and style. As an extension activity, have students write the next episode in the lives of the Baudelaires in the style of Lemony Snicket. Encourage them to create their own pseudonyms, use literary allusions, anagrams, synonyms, and vocabulary from above.



# THE UNFORTUNATE WORLD

## Map Skills

Using clues from the text, as well as their knowledge of maps, students can create a map of the fictional setting in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*. Review with the class different types of maps and the markings associated with each. Then have students select a type of map they wish to replicate.

Students can use the scenarios below as possible springboards for their maps, or search the text for the area they would like to create.

In *The Ersatz Elevator*, we learn that Mr. Poe was “taking a three-week helicopter ride to a mountain peak...” (p. 10). From the penthouse they can view “. . . a faint blue strip far, far away, the beach where they had received the terrible news that had begun all their misfortune” (p. 34). Later in the book we read, “The Fish District smelled like fish because it was located near the docks of the city” (p. 75).

In *The Miserable Mill*, we learn that the children took a train to a “dark and eerie countryside” (p. 4). Mr. Poe remarks on page 5, “What a lovely forest!” And the children’s new guardian makes them work at a lumber mill, where there is a logging camp.

In *The Wide Window*, the orphans go to live with their aunt Josephine, who lives in a house on top of a steep hill that overlooks “the inky blob of Lake Lachrymose, huge and dark as . . . a monster” (p. 10). The children arrive and “look down to see the town far, far below them, the cobblestone road curling around the buildings like a tiny gray snake, and the small square of Damocles Dock” (p. 10).



## CRYPTIC TRIPTYCH

### Art

In *The Austere Academy* Mr. Snicket explains what a triptych is (p. 55) and gives a few examples. Ask students to choose one of the books about the Baudelaires and draw a triptych to illustrate what has happened to them. Have students share their drawings with the class and have the other class members guess which book the illustrations represent.



## FILLED WITH HOT AIR

### Science

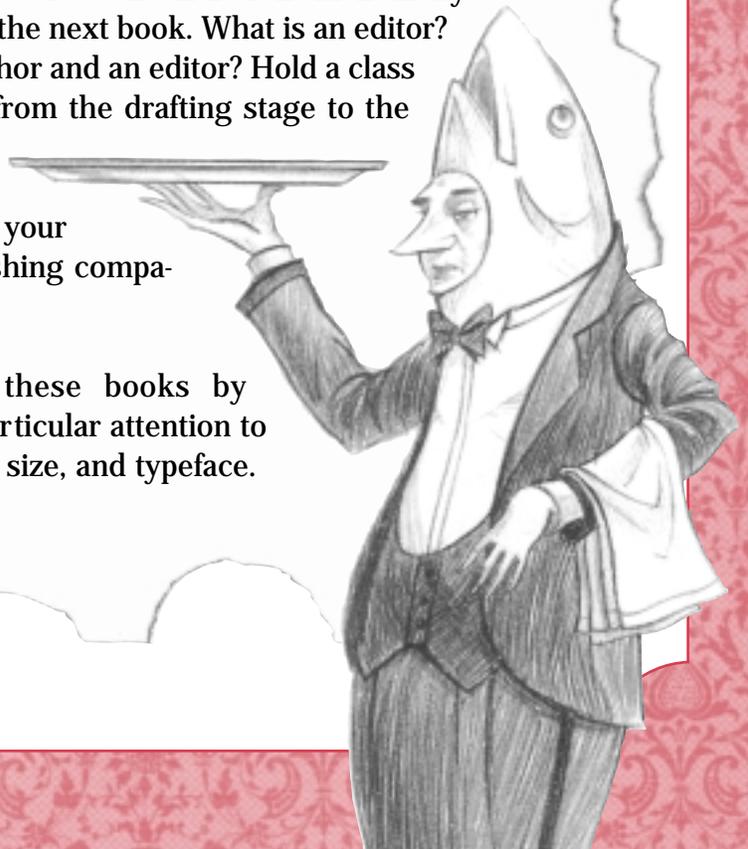
In *The Vile Village* the Quagmire triplets escape with Hector in a self-sustaining hot air mobile home. Have students research how hot air balloons work and present their findings in a report with illustrations.



# ADDITIONAL DISCUSSION

Lemony Snicket writes about the Baudelaire orphans and their adventures, or, more aptly, their misadventures, but he has left some questions unanswered. Hold a class discussion and brainstorm possible answers to these questions.

- Who is Lemony Snicket? How does he know so much about the Baudelaire family?
- Who is Beatrice?
- Why do you think Lemony Snicket warns readers at the beginning of and several times throughout each book to put it down and read something else? Have you considered obeying his request? Why or why not?
- There is a clue in the illustration at the end of each book to give the reader a hint about what the next adventure might be. Choose one of the books you have read and discuss the clue. Would you have used the same clue or another one? Why? Try drawing an illustration with a clue for your favorite book about the Baudelaire family.
- At the end of each book there is a Letter to the Editor from Lemony Snicket that foreshadows the events in the next book. What is an editor? What is the relationship between an author and an editor? Hold a class discussion on the publishing process, from the drafting stage to the final book release. Model the process by assigning an “editor” to every “author” within the class. Then turn your classroom into a children’s book publishing company!
- Investigate the physical nature of these books by comparing them to other books. Pay particular attention to the following elements: book cover, art, size, and typeface.



# INNOVATIVE INVENTIONS

Violet is always using the materials at hand to devise an invention when there's trouble.  
Here is a scenario where you will need to invent something:

Unfortunately, you are trapped at the bottom of a well.  
Describe or draw an invention that will help you escape using the following items:

A candle	Fish food	A pair of tongs
A packet of gum	Six envelopes	The French flag
Eyeglasses	A beach ball	Shoelaces
A large bucket	Five rubber bands	A can of root beer



## WRETCHED REPRODUCIBLES

The following pages contain four reproducible activities.

### Reproducible Activity A: Baby Babble

Answers: Across: 1. Reauhop; 2. Minda; 4. Ecrif; 6. Tretchev; 8. Chonex

Answers: Down: 2. Manco; 3. Neebdes; 5. Fut; 7. Futa; 8. Chittol; 9. Wolick; 10. Bax

### Reproducible Activity B: Secret Message

Have students correct the secret message from Lemony Snicket. The errors include: konstant (constant), reed (read), terrible (terrible), Court (Count), fand (find), ebery (every), messuge (message), al (all) Answer: C A R N I V A L

### Reproducible Activity C: Scavenger Hunt

For the Scavenger Hunt, you may want to gather the following types of books for students to use: an atlas, a dictionary, a medical book, a cookbook, a French/English dictionary, and books about dogs, plants, gardening, and nature. You can have the students collect these books on your next trip to the school library, or hold the scavenger hunt there.

### Reproducible Activity D:

Answers: 1) B, 2) C, 3) A, 4) C, 5) A, 6) A, 7) B, 8) D

# BABY BABBLE

Sunny, the youngest Baudelaire, speaks in a nonsensical manner which most people find difficult to understand. Using the glossary below, fill in each crossword puzzle clue with the word from Sunny's vocabulary that makes sense.

ACROSS:

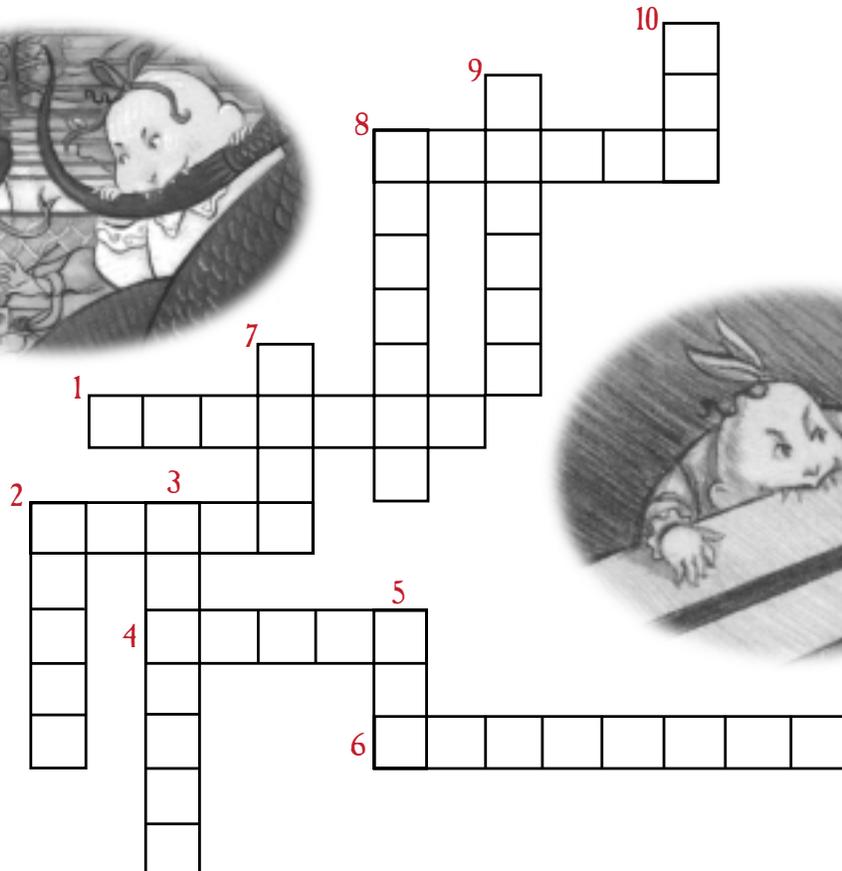
1. Something you might say to a friend before she takes a test
2. What would you say to someone if she said the sky is falling?
4. A synonym for afraid
6. What you might say to someone who is returning from a trip
8. What you are if no one else is around

DOWN:

2. What you might yell if you were drowning
3. You might ask this when something said is unclear
5. You might say this to your older brother who is accusing you of whining all the time
7. You say this to someone who shares the same opinion
8. The opposite of false
9. People who offer to lend a hand might say this
10. How you might feel if you got called into the principal's office

## SUNNY'S GLOSSARY

- |   |                               |  |
|---|-------------------------------|--|
| <b>Fut</b> . . . . .I do not!           | <b>Reauhoh</b> . . .Good luck | <b>Wolick</b> . . . We're happy to be of assistance  |
| <b>Minda</b> . . . .Don't be ridiculous | <b>Ecrif</b> . . . . .Scared  | <b>Futa</b> . . . . .I agree                         |
| <b>Chonex</b> . . .All alone            | <b>Chittol</b> . . .True      | <b>Neebdes</b> . . .Can you explain that a bit more? |
| <b>Tretchev</b> . .Welcome home         | <b>Bax</b> . . . . .Nervous   | <b>Manco</b> . . . .Help                             |



# SECRET IN A MESSAGE

Below is a letter from Lemony Snicket warning you of the whereabouts of Count Olaf. Circle the spelling errors and write out the correct or missing letters on the lines provided at the bottom of the page. When you have completed this grueling task, it will reveal one of the places that Count Olaf terrifies the Baudelaires.



Dear Reader:

If this letter has reached you, it must mean that you have read the woeful tales of the Baudelaires. Against your better judgment and my konstant warnings, you have chosen to reed about the misery and horrors that have befallen Violet, Klaus, and Sunny Baudelaire. From the terrible news on the beach, to the deadly serpents, the hungry leeches, and the angry mob, you have sadly shared in their suffering. Now, they need your help. If you are up to this task, you can help find the Baudelaires to warn them that Court Olaf is on the prowl.

However, you must fand the clue yourself. When you have uncovered the clue, be very careful not to say it out loud, for surely Count Olaf and his associates are close by, listening to ebery word you say. So, keep it to yourself, but be sure to find a way to relay the messuge to the Baudelaires without being caught.

I hope you, unlike the ill-fated Baudelaires, are lucky enough to survive this risky mission.

With al due respect,

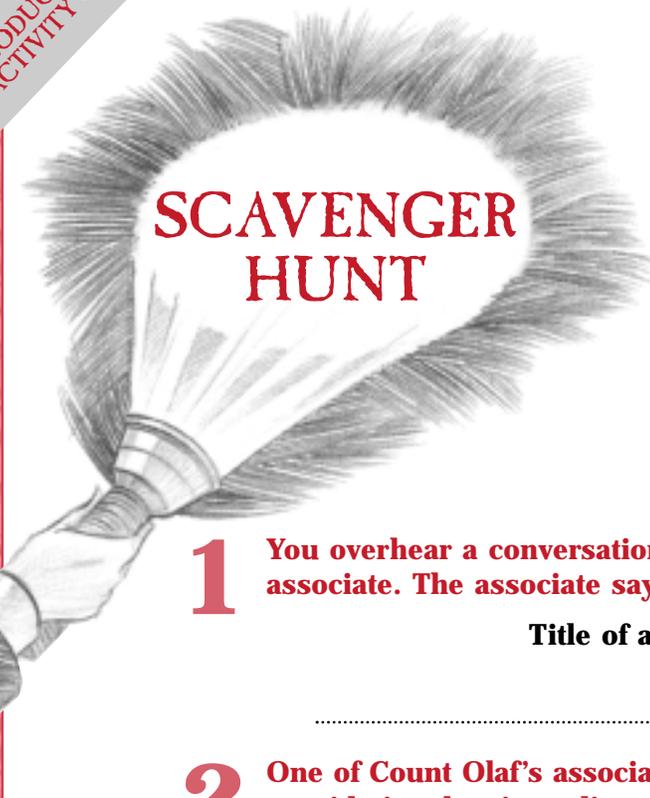
*Lemony Snicket*

Lemony Snicket

C

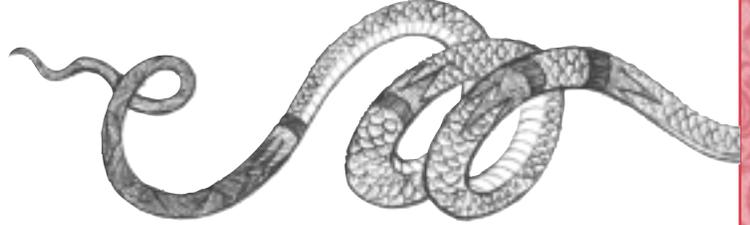
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# SCAVENGER HUNT

Klaus Baudelaire uses books to find solutions to problems at hand. Given the unfortunate events below, find the title of a book where you might find information that can help you.



- 1** You overhear a conversation between Count Olaf and a French-speaking associate. The associate says, “Je veux des gants noir.”

**Title of a book that might help you:**

.....

- 2** One of Count Olaf’s associates is making you dinner and insists that cyanide is a key ingredient in chicken parmigiana.

**Title of a book that might help you:**

.....

- 3** You are being chased by a pack of wild dogs and need to find a way to tame them.

**Title of a book that might help you:**

.....

- 4** You are told that you may not see the Quagmire triplets because they have a highly contagious disease called scoliosis.

**Title of a book that might help you:**

.....

- 5** You are trying to plan an escape route to another country, but you’re not familiar with the local roads.

**Title of a book that might help you:**

.....

- 6** Violet receives a mysterious plant as a gift from an unidentified secret admirer. The plant has red, waxy leaves.

**Title of a book that might help you:**

.....

Klaus solves problems by conducting research to learn more about the subject matter at hand. Since Klaus is not here, and hopefully you've done your research by reading the books in **A SERIES OF UNFORTUNATE EVENTS**, please show off your knowledge by answering the questions below.



- 1** What is the name of the evil man who is after the Baudelaire orphans?

A. Old Man Grampus	C. Mr. Poe
B. Count Olaf	D. Lemony Snicket
- 2** Which of the names below is not one of the Baudelaire orphans?

A. Sunny	C. Adam
B. Violet	D. Klaus
- 3** How did the Baudelaire orphans' parents die?

A. A fire	C. Sore throats
B. An angry rhinoceros	D. Old age
- 4** What is Count Olaf's most distinguishing feature?

A. A mole over his right eye	C. A tattoo of an eye on his left ankle
B. A birthmark behind his left knee	D. An incredibly handsome smile
- 5** How is Count Olaf supposedly related to the Baudelaires?

A. The Baudelaires' distant cousin	C. Sunny Baudelaire's godfather
B. Hairdresser to the Baudelaires' mother	D. The Baudelaires' long-lost brother
- 6** In *The Reptile Room*, which of Count Olaf's associates helped attempt to capture the Baudelaires?

A. The hooked man posing as Dr. Lucafont	C. The Incredibly Deadly Viper
B. White-faced woman	D. The Cyclops
- 7** Where would Count Olaf most likely be lurking?

A. A small apartment in Siberia	C. A warm tropical island near Vermont
B. Anywhere near the Baudelaires	D. In the White House
- 8** Which of the following disguises has Count Olaf not used to trick the Baudelaire orphans?

A. A shaven eyebrow	C. A shaven beard
B. A shaven head	D. Shaving cream

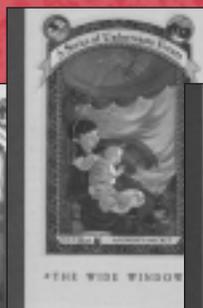
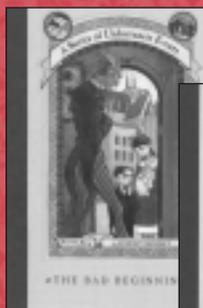




*A Series of Unfortunate Events*



Books available  
in this dreadful  
*New York Times* best-selling series...



A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book the First:  
**THE BAD BEGINNING**  
Tr 0-06-440766-7

A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book the Fourth:  
**THE MISERABLE MILL**  
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A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book the Seventh:  
**THE VILE VILLAGE**  
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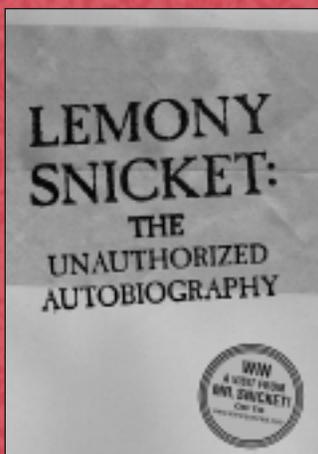
A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book the Second:  
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A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book the Eighth:  
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A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book the Sixth:  
**THE ERSATZ ELEVATOR**  
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Lemony Snicket:  
**The Unauthorized Biography**  
Tr 0-06-000719-2

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www.harperchildrens.com

  
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Teaching ideas prepared by Susan Geyer, Library Media Specialist, the Crowley Ninth Grade Campus, Fort Worth, Texas.  
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