



A Series of Unfortunate Events #1: The Bad Beginning

By Lemony Snicket

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A Series of Unfortunate Events #1: The Bad Beginning By Lemony Snicket Bibliography

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

Make no mistake. *The Bad Beginning* begins badly for the three Baudelaire children, and then gets worse. Their misfortunes begin one gray day on Briny Beach when Mr. Poe tells them that their parents perished in a fire that destroyed their whole house. "It is useless for me to describe to you how terrible Violet, Klaus, and even Sunny felt in the time that followed," laments the personable (occasionally pedantic) narrator, who tells the story as if his readers are gathered around an armchair on pillows. But of course what follows is dreadful. The children thought it was bad when the well-meaning Poes bought them grotesque-colored clothing that itched. But when they are ushered to the dilapidated doorstep of the miserable, thin, unshaven, shiny-eyed, money-grubbing Count Olaf, they know that they--and their family fortune--are in real trouble. Still, they could never have anticipated how much trouble. While it's true that the events that unfold in Lemony Snicket's novels are bleak, and things never turn out as you'd hope, these delightful, funny, linguistically playful books are reminiscent of Roald Dahl (remember *James and the Giant Peach* and his horrid spinster aunts), Charles Dickens (the orphaned Pip in *Great Expectations* without the mysterious benefactor), and Edward Gorey (*The Gashlycrumb Tinies*). There is no question that young readers will want to read the continuing unlucky adventures of the Baudelaire children in *The Reptile Room* and *The Wide Window*. (Ages 9 and older) --Karin Snelson

From Publishers Weekly

"If you are interested in stories with happy endings, you would be better off reading some other book." So cautions Snicket, the exceedingly well-mannered narrator of these two witty mock-gothic novels featuring the misadventures of 14-year-old Violet, 12-year-old Klaus and infant Sunny Baudelaire. From the first, things look unfortunate indeed for the trio: a fire destroys their home, killing their parents along with it; the executor of their parents' estate, the obtuse Mr. Poe (with a son, Edgar), ignores whatever the children have to say; and their new guardian, Count Olaf, is determined to get his hands on the Baudelaire fortune. But by using their individual gifts (Violet's for inventing, Klaus's for reading and researching and baby Sunny's for biting) the three enterprising children thwart the Count's plan for now. The author uses formal, Latinate language and intrusive commentary to hilarious effect, even for readers unfamiliar with the literary conventions he parodies. The peril in which he places the Baudelaires may be frightening (Count Olaf actually follows through on his threats of violence on several occasions), but the author paints the satire with such broad strokes that most readers will view it from a safe distance. Luckily for fans, the woes of the Baudelaires are far from over; readers eager for more misfortune can turn to *The Reptile Room*, for an even more suspenseful tale. Exquisitely detailed drawings of Gothic gargoyles and mischievous eyes echo the contents of this elegantly designed hardcover. Age 9-up. (Sept.) Copyright 1999 Reed Business Information, Inc.

From Library Journal

Grade 4-6-This series chronicles the unfortunate lives of the Baudelaire children: Violet, 14; Klaus, 12; and the infant, Sunny. In *Bad Beginning*, their parents and possessions perish in a fire, and the orphans must use their talents to survive as their lives move from one disastrous event to another. Surrounded by dim-witted though well-meaning adults, the Baudelaires find themselves in the care of their evil relative, Count Olaf, a disreputable actor whose main concern is getting his hands on the children's fortune. When Olaf holds Sunny hostage to force Violet to marry him, it takes all of the siblings' resourcefulness to outwit him. Violet's inventive genius, Klaus's forte for research, and Sunny's gift for biting the bad guys at opportune moments save the day. However, the evil Count escapes, only to return in *The Reptile Room* just as the children are

settling into a far more pleasant life with their new guardian, Uncle Monty, who is promptly murdered by Olaf and his cohorts. Though the villain escapes again, and beloved Uncle Monty is dead, the children are safe...for now. While the misfortunes hover on the edge of being ridiculous, Snicket's energetic blend of humor, dramatic irony, and literary flair makes it all perfectly believable. The writing, peppered with fairly sophisticated vocabulary and phrases, may seem daunting, but the inclusion of Snicket's perceptive definitions of difficult words makes these books challenging to older readers and excellent for reading aloud.

Linda Bindner, formerly at Athens Clarke County Library, GA

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Ronald Finch:

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