

# **The Austere Academy Study Guide**

## **The Austere Academy by Lemony Snicket**

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# Plot Summary

*The Austere Academy* is a school that most children would dread. It is entirely grey and devoid of any character. However, the characters in the story provide their own unique coloration to this dull place. An entirely new group of characters are introduced in this story, starting with Principal Nero.

The Baudelaires find that they are once again in the care of an adult who doesn't have the slightest clue as to how to take care of children. Nero fancies himself a genius and spends his time torturing children and playing the violin. Sunny gets stuck with the worst lot and ends up having to become his secretary.

The children are forced to live in a horrible shack and are deprived the use of a library for the first time in this series. However, this void is filled with the introduction of two actual friends for the Baudelaires. Up to this point, the children had been lacking any sort of friends that were their own age and Isadora and Duncan Quagmire are an interesting addition.

Like many schools, Prufrock Prep is filled with nasty children, but there are none quite as nasty as Carmelita Spats. This particular child takes it upon herself to make the Baudelaires even more miserable and helps the new gym teacher further torture them. The school's new gym teacher, Coach Genghis, wears a turban and high-top running shoes. This is, of course, a new disguise for Count Olaf, but his initial plan is not clear to the Baudelaires. Instead of trying to kill them, he simply makes them run around in a circle every night.

However, this soon wears the children down and their new friends vow to help them figure out what Count Olaf is up to. The Quagmires research the problem for their friends as the Baudelaires run until dawn. Their schoolwork begins to suffer and Nero announces they will have to take a quiz. If they fail, they will be expelled and placed in the care of Coach Genghis.

Finally, Count Olaf's plan has become clear to the children, but there doesn't seem to be much they can do to thwart him. There are no adults that the children can go to for help and Mr. Poe is unreachable. Once again, it is up to the children to solve their own problem. Unfortunately, running all night and staying awake all day precludes them from studying for their exam and their world starts to look even bleaker.

However, the Quagmires come up with a plan to help their friends. Will it be successful, or will Count Olaf finally gain the upper hand over the Baudelaires? The Quagmires have just gotten themselves into more trouble than they ever could have imagined.



# Chapter 1

## Chapter 1 Summary

The Baudelaires have just arrived at what will be their new home, Prufrock Preparatory School. The first impression of the school does not seem promising. Mr. Poe is quite enamored with the school and the idea of a prep school in general, but Violet, Klaus and Sunny aren't so sure.

They are rudely shoved aside and called cakesniffers by a little girl as they walk towards the school. The rest of the children are playing aimlessly on a burned lawn and the whole feel of the school seems wrong to the Baudelaires. The rude girl, Carmelita Spats, runs by again and the Baudelaires are confirmed in their shyness. Starting at a new school is never easy and they are worried about what they are about to face. Violet wonders if anyone will appreciate her inventions, Klaus wonders if there are any good books to read and Sunny wonders if there will be anything to bite.

As they near the school buildings, they realize that they are drearily grey and mysteriously shaped. Although to Mr. Poe they look like toes, to the Baudelaire children, they look like tombstones. The weight of their situation starts to sink in. Mr. Poe informs the children that the school has an advanced computer system that has been programmed to keep Count Olaf away. This point gives the children some hope, but they have their doubts that a computer can keep anything away, regardless of how advanced it is.

Just as the children are ready to face their newest adventure, Mr. Poe tells them that he has to leave and that they will need to meet their new principal on their own. As the Baudelaires enter the archway of Prufrock Prep, they notice the school's motto, "Memento Mori." The motto translates to "Remember you will die." This is a fitting start to what promises to be another harrowing adventure in the saga of the Baudelaire children.

## Chapter 1 Analysis

The appearance of Carmelita Spats on the first page of this book is a foreshadowing of just how miserable the Baudelaires' lives are about to become. They have no idea of the difficulties they are about to face, but their past experiences have made them wary. The children are understandably shy as they head to their first day of school. This is a rough time for any child, but considering what the Baudelaires have been through, it is even tougher. They have no family and to this point, no friends with whom to commiserate.

The school's motto and architecture also foreshadow the entire tone of this book. The school is a dreary place, one that is completely lacking in cheer. Of course, with this series, one cannot expect an overload of happiness and this book is no exception.



## Chapter 2

### Chapter 2 Summary

Violet, Klaus and Sunny enter the administrative building and are greeted with the sounds of a violin being played very badly. The children recall something their father said shortly before his death. "There is no worse sound in the world than someone who cannot play the violin who insists on doing so anyway." At the time, they had no idea how right their father was.

The sound of the violin is coming from the office of Principal Nero and the children gather the courage to knock on the door. A booming voice frightens them, as Nero demands to know who is interrupting him. Principal Nero is a strange man. His clothes are rumpled and his nose is small and red. His hair is almost completely gone and what remains has been tied up into four ponytails that bob when he moves. Nero believes that he is a genius and should not be bothered by small children. He also has an annoying habit of repeating what the children say in a high voice. This continues as the Baudelaires introduce themselves and begin to learn the rules of their new school.

Prufrock Prep has a very odd collection of rules. Students are not allowed in the administrative building and if they enter, their silverware is taken away at mealtimes. If children are late to a class, their hands are tied behind them during meals. If they are late to a meal, their glasses are taken away from them and their drinks are served in puddles. The worst rule is that the children are forced to listen to Nero's six-hour violin concerts every night. If they do not attend, they must purchase a bag of candy for the principal and watch him eat every piece. The Baudelaires aren't quite sure what to make of this new school.

Nero continues to dishearten them when he informs them that Sunny will have to work in his office as his administrative assistant, since the school does not teach children her age. Because of this, she will never get to use silverware at meals. The final blow to the children is the description of the wonderful dormitory, with a library full of books and comfortable rooms. Since they do not have a parent or a guardian to sign their permission slip, they will be forced to sleep in a shack. They will have only occasional access to the library, which is devastating to them.

So far, the only benefit of the school seems to be the premise that the computer system can keep Count Olaf away. Right now, though, their new principal seems to be just as big of a threat to the Baudelaires.

### Chapter 2 Analysis

Their new principal is much like many of their past guardians. He is completely unfit to care for children, yet has been placed in a position of authority. Many of his worst



attributes are the compilation of several of their past guardians' foibles. He may not be Count Olaf, but he's not much better.

The children learn that their new school is full of strange rules and run, as it is seems, by a maniac. This does not make them very hopeful for their future, particularly if they will be spending a few years at the school. The worst blow of all is the removal of a library. They will not have unrestricted access to the wonderful library contained in the dormitory, or any other comforts for that matter. This is a departure from the previous books and removes the one thing that made the Baudelaires situation livable.

An advanced computer system is supposed to keep Count Olaf away and the children hope that this will be the one thing that works. Their lives have become so awful that they can justify their current situation as being acceptable, as long as Count Olaf does not enter their lives again.



# Chapter 3

## Chapter 3 Summary

The Baudelaires go to see their new home and are sorely disappointed. The shack is filled with tiny, pinching crabs that are not happy to see the children enter their space. Three bales of hay serve as beds and the ceiling is covered in brown fungus. Every so often, the fungus drips a foul liquid onto the floor and the hay. The walls are painted bright green with small pink hearts.

Violet, Klaus and Sunny do their best to find the good in their new situation. The prospect of going to school appeals to Violet and Klaus and Sunny hopes that her new job will be fun, even if she is too young to be an administrative assistant.

The children realize that it must be lunchtime and hurry to the cafeteria to avoid being late. There, they find an enormous lasagna the size of a dance floor, a salad in a bowl as large as a truck and a mountain of garlic bread. Two women, whose faces are completely obscured by masks, are serving the lines of children. They receive their lunch and survey the cafeteria. It is filled with children, some enjoying their food, others without utensils looking glum and still more children who do not have the benefit of using their hands to eat. The prospect of finding a place to sit does not look promising.

As they look for a place to eat, Carmelita Spats spots them. She rudely tells them that they cannot sit with her and starts a chant that is soon picked up by all but two of the children in the cafeteria. The Baudelaires are almost overwhelmed by the nasty reaction they receive until the two children who did not join in the cruelty invite them to sit with them.

Isadora and Duncan Quagmire are about the same ages as the Baudelaires. They look remarkably alike and each one carries a notebook. The Baudelaires quickly learn that Isadora is a poet who writes couplets. She shares a humorous couplet about Carmelita that makes them laugh. Violet, Klaus and Sunny reveal how their parents died and are shocked to find out that the Quagmires parents and their brother died the same way. The reason that the two look so much alike is that they are triplets. The third triplet, Quigley, was their brother who died in a fire with their parents and the two remaining siblings refuse to be called twins.

Since Isadora and Duncan had to spend three semesters in the Orphan Shack, they share what they learned about living there. The Quagmires use their notebooks to jot down important information and they prove to be quite useful. Violet learns that the crabs do not like loud noises and decides to invent noisy shoes. Even though their first day started badly, the Baudelaires managed to meet two new friends, with whom they have much in common.



## Chapter 3 Analysis

The Orphan Shack is the final blow to the children. Not only do the Baudelaires have to conform to strange rules and lose access to a library, they have been forced to live in a filthy shack. These living quarters rival the squalor that they faced in Count Olaf's house in the first book. When a child has a bad day at school, they usually know that at the end of the day, they can return to their home, a safe haven. Now, the Baudelaires don't have a safe place to retire to. They are completely immersed in misery.

As the children brave their first day at the cafeteria, they are subjected to the taunting of not only Carmelita Spats, but also most of the other children. The only thing that keeps the experience from being completely awful is the appearance of Isadora and Duncan Quagmire. For the first time, the Baudelaires have met friends that are their own age. They share the same interests and learn that they have a great deal in common. Finally, a bright spot has appeared in the miserable lives of these children. However, this bright spot may not be enough to withstand the coming storm.





# Chapter 4

## Chapter 4 Summary

After lunch, Violet and Klaus head to class and Sunny goes to the administrative office. Violet's new teacher is named Mr. Remora. He has a large mustache and eats bananas throughout the class. His method of teaching revolves around telling the class stories and then quizzing them on minute details that were mentioned. The children have to write down all of the important facts of the story, but Carmelita keeps interrupting Violet by poking her with a stick and whispering, "orphan." Violet continually loses her concentration.

Klaus' new teacher is named Mrs. Bass. She has long, dark hair that is extremely messy and is described as resembling a gorilla. Her method of teaching leaves as much to be desired as that of her colleague. The children in her class must measure several different items throughout the day, writing down each measurement.

Sunny's new job requires her to answer the phone, type, staple and file. Since she is an infant, these tasks are almost impossible. Her unique way of speaking is not understood by callers and Nero soon gets angry with her. He informs Sunny that since she is running low on staples, he will not buy her any more and she must make them herself.

At the end of the day, the Baudelaires return to their shack and commiserate on their experiences. Although much of the day was bad, the children did manage to make some progress on their environment. Klaus found out that the fungus on the ceiling was sensitive to salt and with the help of the Quagmires, they were able to borrow three saltshakers from the cafeteria. Violet used this opportunity to borrow forks, which they attached to their shoes.

With their noisy shoes and saltshakers, they begin to make the shack more livable. The Quagmires join them and the children fill in their new friends on their day and on Count Olaf. They learn that the Quagmires are also heirs to a large fortune, yet another common link in their bond. As they are discussing this, a shadow is cast over them. Principal Nero has come to the shack with a tall, skinny man. The man is introduced as Coach Genghis and is to replace the previous gym teacher who fell out of a window right before the Baudelaires arrived at the school.

Genghis is wearing a turban that sits low on his forehead, obscuring his eyebrows. It is secured with a red jewel in the center. He is also wearing a sweat suit and high-top sneakers. Nero tells the children to welcome their new coach and Isadora and Duncan immediately follow these orders. The Baudelaires remain on their hay bales, staring up at the new gym teacher. They do not follow Nero's instructions because they know who the man really is. Count Olaf has returned.



## Chapter 4 Analysis

With the help of the Quagmires, Violet, Klaus and Sunny are able to begin to make their lives a little more bearable. They figure out how to get rid of the fungus and keep the crabs from pinching them with their friends' help and advice. The Quagmires write everything down in notebooks, which will prove an important detail before the end of the book.

The absence of Count Olaf couldn't last long and despite the advanced computer system, he has entered their lives once again. The adults have been duped by his disguise and it is doubtful that the children will be able to convince Principal Nero that their new coach is Count Olaf. However, this time they are not alone. In the previous books, the Baudelaires were the only ones who could see through his disguises. Their new friends may just be able to help them in their fight against this evil man.



# Chapter 5

## Chapter 5 Summary

As the silence fills the Orphan Shack, Violet finally stands up and says hello to Coach Genghis. Her siblings look at her as though she has lost her mind, but with a look, she convinces them to welcome the coach. Genghis tells Nero that the three Baudelaires are perfect, that they have just the legs he was looking for. Isadora and Duncan, however, hold no interest for him. Genghis and Nero begin to discuss the concert for the evening and Genghis lays his praise on thick.

The six-hour concert begins and the Baudelaires begin to discuss the new coach with Isadora and Duncan. The Quagmire' think that there is something strange about him and Violet reveals that he is really Count Olaf in disguise. The Quagmires try to get Violet, Klaus and Sunny to tell Nero the truth about Genghis, but Violet knows that it is no use. She explains that if Genghis thinks they don't know who he really is, it will give them more time to figure out what he has planned for them. Klaus and Sunny finally understand their sister's earlier actions in the shack and the children begin to try to figure out Count Olaf's plan.

The children agree to let Nero in on what is going on, but doubt that he will be of any help. Violet, Klaus and Sunny know they'll have to be careful to make sure Genghis doesn't know what they're doing. They give the descriptions of Count Olaf's assistants to the Quagmires and the five children agree to work together to thwart Olaf's new scheme. They then remain quiet for the rest of the concert, happy that they have found two people who want to help them.

For once, the Baudelaires have some friends.

## Chapter 5 Analysis

Violet's reaction is at first, surprising, but soon becomes clear. She is hoping that by avoiding their usual method of instantly recognizing him and trying to convince the adults of his identity, they will be able to trick him. In theory, this should work, but the children are dealing with a criminal mastermind and have bitten off more than they can chew. The Quagmires believe the Baudelaires and offer to help them in finding out what he has planned for them. As the five children work together, pooling their strengths, they should be able to successfully foil his plan once again.

The interminable concerts of Principal Nero are yet another torture in the Baudelaires' new lives. However, this blow is softened by the hope they now feel they are beginning to grasp. They have met people who understand them and want to help them, which is truly a first.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

The next day arrives and the Baudelaires head for Nero's office. On the way, they realize they don't have an appointment to meet with him and will be forced to eat their breakfast without any utensils. They joke about what they'll do if oatmeal or eggs are served and this reminds them of a picnic they had before their parents' death. At the picnic, the Baudelaires had forgotten to bring silverware and had to eat sweet-and-sour shrimp with their hands. Each child remembers that special day and the fun they had with their parents. Then, as their laughter fades, they are reminded of the stark reality of their situation.

Nero is irritated at being interrupted and mocks the children as they try to tell him that they think Count Olaf is in the school. To avoid letting on what they know, the children give various examples of whom Count Olaf could be posing as. Just as they get to Coach Genghis, he walks into the office. The children force themselves to joke with the adults, to keep from revealing to Genghis what they know. They play dumb and joke about taking off his shoes to expose his tattoo and his turban to expose his one eyebrow.

As they joke, Violet and Klaus position themselves to do exactly what they are speaking of. Genghis catches on right before they accomplish their task. He tells Nero that he can't remove his turban for religious reasons and his shoes must stay on because his feet smell. Their plan foiled, the children leave as Genghis tells Nero how much he enjoyed the concert the night before. As he showers Nero in praise, it becomes obvious to the children that Nero will never accept the fact that Genghis is Count Olaf in disguise.

Violet, Klaus and Sunny make their way to the cafeteria, where the Quagmires share the utensils with them. Just as they sit down to eat, trading off who gets to use the utensils, Carmelita arrives at their table. She is carrying a message from Genghis. The message is that the Baudelaires must meet with him on the lawn after dinner, during the violin concert. Carmelita insists on a tip, but the children refuse her. They lose their appetite as they desperately try to figure out what Count Olaf has planned for them.



# Chapter 6

## Chapter 6 Summary

The children's efforts to convince Nero of Coach Genghis's true identity fail miserably. Genghis is manipulating their principal by feeding his need for praise. His constant flattery of Nero has blinded the principal to logic. However, given his personality, it is doubtful that he would have believed them anyway.

Violet, Klaus and Sunny will have to figure out his plan without the help of the adults. When Carmelita delivers the first message, it does not help them to know what is going on. If anything, they end up more confused. The dread that they feel for the coming evening is magnified by this general feeling of not understanding what is going on. They know the other shoe is about to drop, they just don't know when, where, or how it will happen.



# Chapter 7

## Chapter 7 Summary

The rest of the day passes in a fog as Violet, Klaus and Sunny worry about what their evening will bring. The Quagmires don't show up for lunch and the Baudelaires are forced to eat their spaghetti with their hands.

The children cannot focus on their classes and finally meet with the Quagmires over dinner. Since they missed lunch, the Quagmires are forced to forgo their beverages. Isadora announces that she has solved their problem. At first, the Baudelaires are relieved, but this quickly passes when they find out that Isadora only plans to prop open the door of the auditorium. Even though this means that the Quagmires will be able to watch the Baudelaires, it doesn't seem to be a very good solution. They spend the rest of their meal sharing their silverware and glasses with each other.

Filled with trepidation, the Baudelaires head to the lawn and the Quagmires go to the auditorium. When they reach the lawn, Genghis informs the children that they are late and that he has a new exercise program called SORE. This is an acronym for Special Orphan Running Exercises. The Baudelaires soon learn that this entails running around in a large circle in the dark. Genghis has the children paint a glow-in-the-dark track on the lawn and they are forced to run along the track until almost dawn. Since Sunny cannot run, she has to crawl around the circle on all fours. As the children run the track, they begin to wrack their brains to figure out this latest fiendish plot.

## Chapter 7 Analysis

As the children run around the track in the dark, making their way along the illuminated path, they are unable to shed any light on their current problem. Even though they feel better knowing that the Quagmires are watching them, they can't shake the feeling that doom is about to strike.

The Quagmires seem willing to put themselves into danger for their new friends. Little do they know how this resolution will be tested at the end of the story. This first offer of help prefigures the assistance they will provide the Baudelaires later in the tale. However, the shoe does not fall, at least not this night. The Baudelaires end their exercises, exhausted mentally and physically and the solution is no clearer than when they began. These exercises are just the beginning of what Count Olaf has planned for the children.



# Chapter 8

## Chapter 8 Summary

The next afternoon, at lunch, the Baudelaires fill the Quagmires in on what happened. Isadora and Duncan had taken turns during the concert, watching the Baudelaires, but could not figure out what Olaf's plan entailed.

Violet, Klaus and Sunny are sore from head to foot and Sunny falls asleep in her salad. The Baudelaires are so exhausted they cannot focus on their studies or work. As they finish their lunch, Carmelita arrives with another message and a request for a tip. Once again, they will have to meet Genghis on the lawn during the concert. Isadora and Duncan promise to watch the Baudelaires again, to make sure nothing happens to them. This is a small comfort as Violet, Klaus and Sunny wince their way through the rest of the day. The children hope that by working together they will be able to solve the mystery before it is too late.

## Chapter 8 Analysis

The children are exhausted and it is apparent that their teachers are too wrapped up in themselves to notice what is going on. Adults in these stories are usually self-centered, but in this particular story, it is magnified. Carmelita and most of the children in the school are also self-centered. The exception to this rule is the Quagmires, who are willing to do all that they can to help their friends.

The prospect of running through another night does not appeal to the Baudelaires and is certainly not good for their health. They will not be able to keep up the pace of staying up all night and going to school or working throughout the day.



# Chapter 9

## Chapter 9 Summary

Nine monotonous days go by. Each night, Violet, Klaus and Sunny are forced to run laps until dawn. During the day, they sleep through their classes and work and their schoolwork starts to suffer. As the days drag on, the Baudelaires get cranky with their friends. Isadora and Duncan are doing their best to research Count Olaf to figure out his plan, but they aren't coming up with anything.

During lunch, Carmelita arrives yet again, but this time, she's carrying two messages for the Baudelaires. The first is another order to meet Coach Genghis on the lawn after dinner. The second is a request to meet Principal Nero immediately after lunch. As the children walk to the administrative office, they wonder what is in store for them. Principal Nero is his usual annoying self and starts off the conversation informing the Baudelaires that they owe him twenty-seven bags of candy since all three of them have missed the past nine violin concerts. He also demands that they give Carmelita ten tips and suggests that they buy her ten pairs of earrings.

He will not accept their explanation that it is Genghis's fault they missed the concerts, which leads him to his next point. The Baudelaires schoolwork is suffering and Sunny hasn't been doing her work in the office. He informs them that Violet and Klaus will have to take comprehensive exams the next day and Sunny will have to spend the whole day stapling, using homemade staples. If they fail, they will be placed in the care of Coach Genghis, who kindly offered to home school the children.

Finally, Count Olaf's plan has been revealed. If the Baudelaires don't find a way to pass their tests and make staples, they will be delivered right into his clutches. Desperate, Violet tells Nero who Genghis really is, but he does not believe her. The children do their best to convince him, but to no avail.

After they leave the administrative office, the Baudelaires meet with the Quagmires to figure out their situation. They don't have much time to find the answer.

## Chapter 9 Analysis

As the children become more exhausted, their schoolwork starts to slide. Instead of being concerned about them, Nero tries to have them expelled. Even though he was never a good principal or authority figure, he sinks to an all-time low by playing right into Count Olaf's hands.

The children are faced with a desperate situation. They are too tired to study and the exams will be held the first thing in the morning. How can they possibly learn what they missed in class when they are running around in circles all night?





# Chapter 10

## Chapter 10 Summary

The children meet in the Orphan Shack and the Quagmires reveal what they have found out about Count Olaf during their research. A man who met his description was wanted for the strangling of a Bishop and throwing a woman off of a cliff, but had always eluded authorities.

The information isn't very helpful to their current situation. Even though in preparation for their exams Isadora and Duncan have written down all of Mr. Remora's stories and noted all of Mrs. Bass's objects' measurements, the Baudelaires won't have time to study the notes. As they brainstorm, the children compare what famous people would have done in their shoes, which causes Duncan to have an idea. The Quagmires will pose as the Baudelaires and run laps for them while they are busy studying and making staples. Isadora and Duncan will disguise themselves as Violet and Klaus, but they don't have a third person to pose as Sunny.

The children decide to tie a string around a bag of flour that is approximately the same size as Sunny and drag it behind them using the string. The plan has been laid out, but will the five children be able to pull it off without raising the suspicion of Count Olaf?

The Quagmires have just volunteered for a dangerous mission, one that will change their lives.

## Chapter 10 Analysis

The Baudelaires truly have found wonderful friends in the Quagmires. They finally have found people who are willing to help them, even if it means risking their personal safety. By offering to pose as the Baudelaires, the Quagmires have just opened themselves up to more danger than they ever could have imagined.

The research skills of the Quagmires prove useful to the Baudelaires, who haven't had time to study in class. This chapter illustrates how well matched the friends are and highlights the strengths that they share.



# Chapter 11

## Chapter 11 Summary

The Baudelaires meet with the Quagmires after dinner. Isadora and Duncan are wearing their disguises, but they can't disguise the fact that they look differently than Violet and Klaus. They don't have much time and the children hope that the darkness will conceal their true identities.

Violet manages to sneak a potato, a dab of creamed spinach and a fork from the cafeteria to aid her in her latest invention, but before the Quagmires leave to head for the lawn, the Baudelaires try to convince them not to go through with their plan. Violet thinks they could run away, Klaus thinks they could make it to a payphone to call Mr. Poe and Sunny throws out the idea that they could change schools. None of these plans will work however and the children know it.

The only choice is to proceed with switching places and hope for the best. Isadora and Duncan ready the bag of flour and head to the lawn. Violet, Klaus and Sunny return to the Orphan Shack to start their studies and staple making. They wonder if they will ever see the Quagmires again. On the way back to the shack, Klaus asks Violet why she took a potato, creamed spinach and a fork. Violet doesn't reveal the full plan, but hints that the crabs in the shack will play a role in it.

Violet instructs Klaus and Sunny to use their noisy shoes to herd the largest crabs into a corner. She has Sunny keep the crabs in the corner while she gets the potato, which is roughly the size of a human toe. Violet selected this potato since it will fool the crabs into thinking they are pinching one of the Baudelaires' toes, a pursuit they find very enjoyable. When the crab snaps at the potato, Violet plans to yank it away and replace it with one of the metal rods. In this way, she can have the crabs slice the rods into staple-size pieces. Meanwhile, she instructs Klaus to begin studying for their exams. He will need to remember all of the measurements for Mrs. Bass's class and then teach Violet Mr. Remora's stories while she works on the staples.

Violet finally has enough pieces to make the necessary staples and they move on to the next phase of their plan. Klaus is busy having the girls quiz him on the measurements and then starts reading the stories from Mr. Remora's class aloud to Violet while she bends the staples. Using the creamed spinach, Violet mixes it with a little bit of hay to make a large, sticky mess. She then blows on it to harden it. This will be used as a glue to hold the staples together. Violet will then bend the metal pieces into staples using the fork from the cafeteria and her shoes to tap them into place. Sunny's job is to keep the crabs away by making noise with her shoes. This works well as the night drags on and the Baudelaires manage to successfully implement the first phase of their plan.

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## Chapter 11 Analysis

Once again, Violet's ingenuity is put to the test. She manages to come up with a way to make staples using homemade ingredients and snapping crabs. Her invention works flawlessly. Klaus's researching skills are used to help Violet and himself learn what they missed in class through the previous nine days. He uses his skills while Violet uses hers and together, they are able to overcome their problem. Sunny helps by keeping the crabs in line and the combined resources of the Baudelaire's are a powerhouse.

Although their part of the plan has worked well, the reader is left to wonder how Isadora and Duncan are doing. Unfortunately, their part of the plan has not had the same result.



# Chapter 12

## Chapter 12 Summary

Dawn arrives, but there is no sight of the Quagmires. Nero arrives just as they finish their studying and staple making, but the children are confident that they will pass their exams. Mr. Remora and Mrs. Bass arrive and begin quizzing the children. Sunny begins stapling booklets as Violet and Klaus answer the test questions.

After each child answers, Nero mimics their answer and asks the teachers if they are wrong. Each time, the children are correct and he starts to pout. He was truly looking forward to expelling them. Finally, Mr. Remora and Mrs. Bass stop the exams since it is obvious that the children know the material. Sunny finishes her booklets and they look wonderful. As the teachers try to convince Nero to expel Carmelita, Coach Genghis approaches the shack. As he gets closer to the shack, the Baudelaires notice that he is whistling. In his hand, he is carrying a hair ribbon, the same hair ribbon that Violet had given Isadora. His eyes are shining brightly and they know that part of their plan has gone horribly awry.

## Chapter 12 Analysis

Thanks to their combined strengths, the Baudelaires are able to pass their exams, to the dismay of Nero. He once again displays his typical childish behavior by mocking their answers and hoping they will fail. With one look, the Baudelaires know although they were successful in passing their exams, their overall plan has failed. Something terrible must have happened to the Quagmires and although they escaped expulsion, they may not be able to help their friends.



# Chapter 13

## Chapter 13 Summary

Violet screams at Coach Genghis to tell her where her friends are, but he ignores her. Genghis launches into an explanation of how the Baudelaires ran their laps, but had to run to their exams, leaving the ribbon, Klaus's glasses and Sunny behind. He discovered the plan when the bag of flour did not follow them. After kicking what he thought was Sunny, he realized he had been duped.

Genghis then convinces Nero to expel the children because they cheated by having the Quagmires run their laps for them. Nero is only too happy to agree and cheers at the opportunity of expelling them. Genghis tells Nero that the Quagmire children have been placed in the cafeteria with the two serving women and will be forced to whisk eggs all day as punishment. The Baudelaires don't believe Genghis and Klaus calls him a liar.

Just as Nero tells the children that they are doubly expelled for insulting Genghis, Mr. Poe arrives. He has arrived to deliver twenty-eight bags of candy and ten pairs of earrings that were due to Carmelita as tips for her messenger service. Nero tells Mr. Poe that the children have been expelled due to cheating and informs him of what a lousy secretary Sunny was. Mr. Poe is horrified to learn that Sunny has been working as an administrative assistant instead of being in school. The Baudelaires break in to tell Mr. Poe who Coach Genghis really is, but they will have an uphill battle to convince him.

They try to tell Mr. Poe that the turban and running shoes are part of the disguise, but he doesn't want to force Genghis to remove them. Genghis uses the excuse once again that that he will not remove the turban for religious reasons and his shoes must stay on because his feet stink. At first, Mr. Poe thinks the children are prejudiced since Genghis is wearing a turban. He is willing to risk the smell however, if Genghis will remove his shoes.

Before the conversation can continue, Coach Genghis runs out the door and across the lawn. The Baudelaires chase after him and the rest of the adults follow them. Thanks to their running exercises, the children prove to be quite fast. Violet manages to grab one end of his turban and it unravels, revealing his one eyebrow. Mr. Poe shouts that Genghis has one eyebrow just like Count Olaf.

Sunny reaches him next and bites his shoelaces, forcing him to leave them behind. The tattoo on his left ankle is clearly visible and once again, Mr. Poe notes the comparison. As the children chase after Count Olaf, they notice the two cafeteria workers are leading the Quagmires to a waiting vehicle. Klaus rushes to get to them, but is unable to free them.

Isadora and Duncan try to tell Violet and Klaus that something important is contained in their notebooks and they keep repeating the initials "V.F.D." They throw the notebooks



out on the lawn as they are forced into the car. Count Olaf kicks Klaus in the stomach, knocking him down and he steals the notebooks.

As Count Olaf drives away with their friends, the Baudelaires try to get the adults to follow them. Once again, Mr. Poe says he will just call the police, but Nero will not let him use the phone and tells him that the children are now triply expelled. The Baudelaires sink to the ground sobbing, as the adults argue back and forth. Count Olaf gets farther away and any hopes of catching him grow dim. Violet asks Klaus what Duncan said and he repeats the initials, "V.F.D." Unfortunately, none of the Baudelaires know what this means. It will be up to them to solve this mystery and find their friends.

## Chapter 13 Analysis

This story draws to a close leaving Violet's, Klaus's and Sunny's future up in the air. Just as they are uncertain about what will come next, they are even more in the dark as to what will happen to their new friends.

The adults have let Count Olaf escape once again, even though the Baudelaires were almost successful in capturing him. Now that they are left in the dust, the Baudelaires will need to solve a new mystery, the meaning of "V.F.D." This is the foreshadowing of the plot in the next few books of the series. The children will attempt to rescue their friends and learn the real meaning of "V.F.D.," but they will meet with unparalleled adversity along the way. The story has just begun.



# Characters

## Violet Baudelaire

Violet Baudelaire is the eldest of the three Baudelaire children. She is fourteen years old and extremely bright. Her genius lies in her ability to invent things and she spends a great deal of her time coming up with new inventions.

Violet has a particular idiosyncrasy of tying up her hair when she is trying to think. The feeling of her hair on her face distracts her and prevents her from concentrating on her inventions.

Since she is the oldest Baudelaire, Violet feels responsible for her two younger siblings, Klaus and Sunny. Violet made a promise to her mother that she would always protect them from harm and do her best to keep them safe and she has taken this promise very seriously.

Violet gets to test her inventing skills throughout this book. First, she must come up with a way to make noisy shoes to keep the crabs away from them in the Orphan Shack. She also has to come up with a way to make staples when Sunny is forced to make her own by Principal Nero.

The Quagmires become good friends with the Baudelaires and Violet is close with Duncan, who is much like Klaus. Their opposite strengths mesh well together and through Duncan's research, Violet is able to come up with useful inventions to make their stay at Prufrock Prep easier.

Violet takes a more active role against Count Olaf in this book. She hatches her own plot to find out what Olaf is doing and actively attempts to deceive him. With the help of the Quagmires, she almost succeeds.

## Klaus Baudelaire

Klaus is the middle child of the three Baudelaire siblings. He is twelve years old and also exceptionally bright, but in a different way from Violet. Klaus is a reader and has read a great many books for a twelve-year-old.

He is very close with his two sisters, even though he did not like Sunny at first. Once he got to know her, however, they became as thick as thieves. He does his best to watch out for his sister and keep her safe.

Klaus becomes close friends with Isadora and Duncan Quagmire. Isadora is well matched with her love of poetry and Klaus's knowledge of books. When Klaus is unable to research their problem, Duncan must take over for him while he runs laps.



Klaus's skills as a researcher come into play when the Baudelaires are forced to study all night for their comprehensive exams. While Violet is busy making staples, Klaus memorizes the notes that Isadora and Duncan made in class and helps Violet learn Mr. Remora's stories.

He is almost successful in catching up to the Quagmires before they are kidnapped, illustrating how he has grown physically throughout the series.

## Sunny Baudelaire

Sunny is the youngest of the Baudelaire children and is described as an infant. She is compared several times to small objects, such as shoes and salamis. Unlike many infants however, Sunny has four teeth that are very well developed and quite sharp.

Her favorite past time is biting things and she prefers to find objects that are very hard. Sunny's talents with her teeth are very useful at various times throughout the story. They also mesh well with the talents of her siblings, making them a very good team.

Her particular idiosyncrasy is her method of speech. Since she is only an infant, she has not yet learned to talk. This doesn't mean she doesn't try and her siblings usually understand her.

In the Austere Academy, Sunny is forced to act as Principal Nero's administrative assistant. She has to learn to answer the phone, file papers and eventually, make her own staples.

Most infants would not be able to perform these tasks and Sunny's development is used to illustrate how advanced the Baudelaire children are.

## Mr. Poe

Mr. Poe is a family friend of the Baudelaire's and is the banker who is in charge of finding the children a proper home and looking after their monetary affairs. He is normally seen with a handkerchief due to his persistent cough.

Mr. Poe does not seem to be an adult that focuses well on what children try to tell him. He underestimates the intelligence of the Baudelaires and tends to write them off as hysterical children, even when they are right.

He is pretty much an ineffectual executor and seems to be endangering the three children through his inaction. While he does not mean to cause them harm, invariably, his actions do just that.

In *The Austere Academy*, Mr. Poe makes a brief appearance in the beginning and end of the book. When he takes the children to the school, he leaves them alone to meet their new principal. He only arrives back at the school to deliver the bags of candy and





tips for Carmelita and becomes involved right as Count Olaf is revealed to be Coach Genghis.

Once again, he refuses to follow Count Olaf and lets him escape.

## Count Olaf/Coach Genghis

Count Olaf is a tall, thin man, with shiny eyes and a uni-brow. He is described as being predatory in nature, similar to a bird of prey. On his left ankle is the tattoo of an eye. The vision of this tattoo haunts the Baudelaire children.

In *The Austere Academy*, Count Olaf disguises himself as Coach Genghis. His disguise consists of a turban with a red jewel that is worn low over his eyebrow and a pair of high-top running shoes that cover his tattoo. This disguise, while not particularly ingenious, works very well on the adults in the story.

As always, his plan is to become the children's guardian again so he can steal their fortune. In this book, while posing as a gym teacher, he forces the children to run laps, night after night, until dawn. This makes them so tired they risk expulsion from the school.

He uses excessive flattery towards the principal in order to perpetuate his scam. The principal is so self-centered; he cannot see that Olaf is manipulating him. His flattery is even extended towards himself, as he calls himself the greatest gym teacher in the world. When Count Olaf is mentioned, he disclaims a link between them, but calls him the greatest actor in the world. It is clear that he has a high opinion of himself and being constantly outwitted by children must be wearing him thin.

## Principal Nero

Principal Nero is the head of Prufrock Preparatory School. He is described as dressed in rumpled clothes that appear to have something sticky spilled on them. His nose is small and red and is described as being like a cherry tomato.

Most of Nero's hair is gone and what is left is tied up into four pigtails on his head. Nero plays the violin, badly. However, to his ears, he is the greatest violinist in the world. He enforces mandatory attendance to his six-hour concerts every night.

Principal Nero is self-centered and enjoys mocking children. Every time they say something, he repeats it in a mocking tone, much like a child. He imposes strange rules on the children at the school and the reader wonders how he was ever put in charge.

There are many similarities between Olaf and Nero. They are both egotists and believe that they are the greatest humans on the planet. This similarity allows Count Olaf to dupe Nero by telling him exactly what he wants to hear.



## Mrs. Bass

Klaus's new teacher is Mrs. Bass. She is obsessed with the metric system. She has long dark hair that is very messy and is described as resembling a gorilla. Her teaching method leaves much to be desired. All throughout her class, the students are forced to measure various items and she writes down the results on the chalkboard.

She is, however, not a bad woman and tries to help the Baudelaire children avoid expulsion.

## Mr. Remora

Violet's new teacher is Mr. Remora. He has a habit of constantly eating bananas throughout class, one after the other. The children are forced to listen to various stories and they must write down all of the details. He quizzes the children later on insignificant details of the stories.

Mr. Remora is described as having a dark, thick mustache that resembles a gorilla's thumb.

## Isadora Quagmire

Isadora is one of three triplets. Her hair is dark and she has wide-set eyes. Like her brother, she carries a notebook around with her everywhere. Her notebook is black and is tucked into the pocket of her sweater, which looks just like her brother's sweater.

Isadora writes couplets and dreams of being a poet. She is very intelligent and gets along very well with Klaus. Even though one of their brothers is dead, Isadora insists on referring to Duncan and herself as triplets.

The Quagmires lost their parents and their brother in a fire, just like the Baudelaires lost their parents. They are also heirs to a large fortune and the similarities between the children are very interesting.

Isadora does her best to help the Baudelaires and they become fast friends. With her help, the Baudelaires are able to study for the exams to avoid getting expelled from the school. Unfortunately, she is kidnapped by Count Olaf at the end of the story because she helped the Baudelaires.

## Duncan Quagmire

Duncan is identical to his sister in every way, except that his notebook is dark green. They dress alike and look alike and share many of the same interests. He is also intelligent and dreams one day of running his own publishing company.



Duncan writes down useful information in his notebook and helps the Baudelaires solve the problem of the territorial crabs and fungus in the Orphan Shack, which he shared with his sister for three semesters.

His researching skills come in handy when Klaus is unable to do it himself. His notes from class help Violet, Klaus and Sunny pass their exams. His help is necessary in discovering Count Olaf's plan, but he is kidnapped along with his sister.

## **Carmelita Spats**

Carmelita is described as a "rude, filthy little girl." She calls the Baudelaires "cakesniffers," and incites the other children to join her in a chant in the lunchroom to mock Violet, Klaus and Sunny.

She is also a teacher's pet and delivers messages from Coach Genghis and Principal Nero to the Baudelaires. She demands tips for her services, which the Baudelaire's do not provide.

Carmelita is generally a nasty person, but the reader ends up wondering what made her that way.

## **Powder Faced Women**

These are the only two accomplices that come with Count Olaf to Prufrock Prep. They are disguised as cafeteria workers and wear masks to cover their faces. They are inactive for most of the book until they kidnap the Quagmires.



# Objects/Places

## Prufrock Preparatory School

A boarding school where the Baudelaires must endure this segment of the series. It is a gray place with buildings shaped like tombstones, or thumbs if you are Mr. Poe's opinion.

### Administrative Building

Principal Nero's office is located in this building. Children are not allowed to enter this building and risk losing their silverware at meals if they do. Since Sunny has to work in Nero's office, she permanently loses the right to use silverware.

### School Building

One of the buildings at Prufrock Prep where classes are held. It is described as being gray and rounded on the top, like all of the buildings at the school.

### Auditorium

Another grey, rounded building. This is the location of Nero's insufferable, mandatory violin concerts.

### Cafeteria

The common eating area for the students at Prufrock Prep. The food is served in gargantuan quantities.

### The Dormitory

This building contains comfortable rooms, a library and a living room with a large fireplace. The Baudelaire's are not allowed to live in this dormitory.

### The Orphan Shack

A shack filled with brown fungus, hay bales, small crabs and tacky walls. The name of the shack is due to a school policy that does not allow children without signed parental slips to live in the dormitory. Orphans at the school are forced to live in this shack.



## **The Lawn**

Gym classes at the school are held out on the lawn. This is also where the Baudelaires are forced to run endless laps by Coach Genghis.

## **The Advanced Computer**

A computer in Nero's office that has been programmed to keep Count Olaf away. It fails miserably.

## **Noisy Shoes**

Violet's invention to keep the crabs away in the Orphan Shack.



# Themes

## Death

Death and morbidity play an enormous role in this book. The first thing the children noticed about their new school is that every single one of the buildings is shaped like a tombstone. This does not seem to affect Mr. Poe, who sees them rather as big toes. Do the children perceive the buildings as tombstones due to their recent trials or their fears? Or is there something more to this architecture?

That question is quickly answered when the children read the school's motto. "Memento Mori" is the motto, a Latin phrase that means, "Remember you will die." The author's choice to use such an overtly obvious theme of death in relation to a school is somewhat disturbing. Although this series focuses on death, it is never focused on in a school environment. However, no one is actually killed in this book, aside from a brief mention of the old gym teacher falling out of a window.

The reaction of the Quagmires to the deaths of their parents and their bother is very interesting. The Quagmires are triplets and continue to call themselves as such, even though one of them has died. They insist on sticking to this definition, correcting anyone who calls them twins.

## Humiliation

The humiliation of children in this story reaches an all-time high. Principal Nero is the main culprit. He forces children to listen to his six-hour long recitals and if they do not attend, they are forced to buy him a bag of candy and watch him eat it.

If children enter the administrative building, they are punished by having their silverware taken away at meals. Other public humiliations include having their glasses removed at meals or being forced to eat with their hands tied behind their backs for various infractions.

Other children are involved in humiliation as well. Carmelita Spats incites an entire cafeteria of children to begin chanting, "cakesniffing orphans in the orphan's shack," on the Baudelaires first day of school. Out of all of the students at Prufrock Prep, only two are nice to the Baudelaires. The Quagmires become the Baudelaires' first real friends in a very long time.

The humiliation used in the book is extreme, but illustrates how children can feel when they are faced with ridiculous rules and what they perceive as overly harsh punishments for breaking these rules. In reality, a principal like Nero would not last long, but he serves as the main clueless adult in this story.



In addition to being clueless to their plight with Count Olaf, the teachers seem to be too tied up with their own dreary lives to notice the extreme humiliation that takes place. No one speaks up for or helps the children, leaving them to their own devices as well. This is used to illustrate the gradual tuning out of many parents in today's society.

## Immaturity

While many adults in this series are ineffectual, Principal Nero is the first to be completely immature. He constantly mimics the children in a mocking tone, even when they have a serious problem.

In many cases in these books, the children act like adults and the adults act like children, but never so keenly as with this character. Nero is truly an annoying, childish character and is mirrored by Carmelita Spats.

Carmelita gets somewhat of a pass because she is still a child, but her behavior is encouraged by the adults and she takes part in the humiliation of the Baudelaires and the Quagmires.

When Coach Genghis arrives on the scene, he feeds Nero's immaturity by praising him constantly and agreeing with him. He also feeds Carmelita, by making her his special messenger. In this way, Count Olaf has managed to befriend the two people who make the Baudelaires miserable. In a way, they become his associates, since the majority of them are not included in this story.

The immaturity of Nero leads to more problems for the Baudelaires as he tries to get rid of them. He falls for Genghis's plan and seems to be rooting for the children to fail their exams. In the end, he remains true to form by refusing to admit his mistakes. He uses childish language throughout and his last line in the book is no exception.

## Family Ties

The importance of family is always a main component in these stories, but this particular installment puts the focus on this issue. The Baudelaires have experienced the death of their parents, making them appreciate each other all the more. They do not act like normal siblings, for the most part and have learned to get along much better than other children. The loss of their parents makes them cling to one another.

The Quagmires have been through a similar situation, right down to the fire. They lost not only their parents, but a brother as well. The children had been triplets until his death and insist on using this moniker, even after he has died. Technically twins would be incorrect, but since they are the only two surviving siblings, it seems natural to refer to them as twins. However, the Quagmires consistently correct anyone who makes this mistake.



This refusal to let go of their moniker is interesting. In a way, they have accepted the deaths of their parents more readily than the death of their sibling. The Baudelaires reflect on this and realize that they are truly lucky to have one another. Life without one of the Baudelaires doesn't seem possible to any of them.

The two groups of children begin to form almost a new family, more than a friendship. They take the time to learn about each other's likes, dislikes, how Sunny talks and what they have in common. Since both sets of children were subject to identical losses, they find a common ground immediately.

These ties will last through the remaining books in this series as the Baudelaires go on a quest to find their kidnapped friends.





# Style

## Point of View

The Austere Academy is told in a third-person narrative. As in the first and second books, the author often uses asides to the reader, encouraging them to stop reading throughout the book. The author's habit of breaking into the narrative to reveal upcoming plot twists is continued, but not as acutely as in previous stories. We are given subtle hints and clues that lead us to believe that some characters are not who they claim to be.

The book begins with a discussion on how you can usually tell what a book will contain after reading the first sentence. Several different examples are given, ending with the sentence that in fact begins this book. This point is brought up again, later in the book, with one final plea to stop reading.

In the place of the usual dramatic irony, we are provided with small clues that, when added up, give us an idea of how the story will unfold. This is a departure from the previous books in this series.

## Setting

The story begins as the children arrive at their new home and school, Prufrock Preparatory. The buildings are shaped liked tombstones and the school's motto translates as, "Remember You Will Die." This sets the tone of this particularly gloomy installment.

The story takes place entirely in the grounds of the school. The children live in the Orphan Shack and spend their days inside the school building. Sunny spends her days in the Administrative Building, working for Principal Nero. At night, the children are forced to run around the grounds of the school by Coach Genghis.

Unlike a normal school setting, Prufrock Prep is rather strange. The school itself is morbid, the children are either indifferent or mean, with the exception of the Quagmires and the administrators are very strange. The teachers are disinterested in teaching and the principal would rather play his violin. Chaos reigns supreme at this school, but apparently, the parents of the children enrolled there do not care.

As always, there is a library in the Baudelaires new school, but they don't get to spend much time there. The Quagmires are able to use the library, but it is not as helpful a location as it normally is. In their previous homes, the children always had a library and being denied access to this one is a further step down in their dismal situation.



The school grounds that the Baudelaires traverse every night are the scenes for the conclusion of the book. The Quagmires' attempts to help the Baudelaire have put them into a real quagmire, engineered by Count Olaf.

## Language and Meaning

The names of locations in this series typically describe something bleak or hopeless. The Austere Academy is no exception. As always, the title of the book is an alliteration, a technique used throughout the series.

The adults in the story seem to be less educated than the children, or at the very least, bored. Principal Nero speaks in a mocking tone most of the time, mimicking what the children say. Throughout much of the story, the dialogue of the children is more adult than his.

A new word, "cakesniffer," is introduced in this book. The exact meaning is never provided, but is an insult frequently hurled at the Baudelaires and the Quagmires by Carmelita Spats.

Sunny is developing more language skills as the series progresses. In this book, she sometimes uses almost Spanish phrases when she speaks. For example, when Isadora tells her that she meant no offense, Sunny responds with "denada." When read aloud, this sounds like "De nada," which means, "it is nothing," in Spanish.

The names of the Quagmire children, Isadora and Duncan, come from a famous ballerina, Isadora Duncan. The author of this series enjoys plays on words and frequently uses the names of famous people in this way, or alludes to them in the dialogue or in asides to the reader.

## Structure

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, like the preceding books in this series. Each chapter has at least one drawing from the illustrator, Brett Helquist, which add a unique element to the story.

Frequent asides are given throughout the book, as the author discusses the plot with the reader. You are given the feeling of being in the same position with Lemony Snicket as he tells the tale. Since he knows the ending of the story, you are allowed glimpses into what will happen ahead of time.

The chapters are kept brief and often end up in the air, to appeal to the age group that is most likely to read these stories. They would work well for selecting chapters to read aloud, as each one stands on its own and frequently ends with a cliffhanger.

The ending of the book is typical of the books in this series. You are left to wonder what will happen to the Baudelaire children and their new friends, the Quagmires.



## Quotes

"What a charming word that is," said Mr. Poe. "Cakesniffers. I don't know what it means, but it reminds me of pastry." Chapter One, p. 10.

"It is traditional," he said sternly, "to applaud when a genius has been introduced." Chapter One, p. 19.

"As the children walked across the shack to sit glumly on one of the bales of hay, they were disappointed to learn that the crabs were territorial, a word which here means, 'unhappy to see small children in their living quarters.'" Chapter Two, p. 33.

"I would rather eat a bowl of vampire bats than spend an hour with Carmelita Spats." Chapter Three, p. 46.

"And I imagine it is difficult to find words that rhyme with 'Olaf,'" Violet said. "It is difficult," Isadora admitted. All I can think of so far is 'pilaf' which is a kind of a rice dish." Chapter Four, p. 64.

"Hee hee hee," Nero said, shaking his pigtails in laughter. "You're like three trained monkeys." Chapter Six, p. 92.

"Kosbal!" Sunny shrieked. "Does Sunny mean, 'I have a plan?'" Isadora asked. "I'm trying to get the hang of her way of talking." Chapter Six, p. 96.

"But Sunny is a baby," Klaus protested. "She can't really run, at least not professionally." Chapter Seven, p. 117.

"Are you deaf as well as cakesniffy?" Carmelita asked. Chapter Eight, p. 128.

"But what about Sunny?" Violet asked. "There's no way two people can disguise themselves as three people." Chapter Ten, p. 162.

"Insulting your coach," Nero said, shaking his pigtailed head. "Now you're doubly expelled." Chapter Thirteen, p. 202.

"Merd," Sunny shrieked, holding up a tiny piece of shoelace. She meant something like, "That's what we've been trying to tell you." Chapter Thirteen, p. 213.



## Topics for Discussion

Isadora and Duncan Quagmire still consider themselves triplets, even after the death of their brother. Why do you think they cling to this definition?

The buildings at Prufrock Prep and the motto of the school revolve around death. Why do you think this symbolism was used?

Throughout the book, the Baudelaires and other students at Prufrock Prep are humiliated by Principal Nero. Why do you think he does this to these children?

Count Olaf is very successful in disguising himself in this book. What methods did he use to ensure that he would not be asked to remove his disguise?

Carmelita Spats appears to have no saving graces. Why do you think she treats everyone so horribly and can you describe one person you have met who resembles her?

Mrs. Bass and Mr. Remora are incredibly poor at teaching, but appear to truly care about the Baudelaires education at the end of the book. Why do you think they have become complacent in their careers as educators?

Isadora Quagmire writes several couplets throughout this book. Write a couplet of your own that describes The Austere Academy.