

The Miserable Mill Study Guide

The Miserable Mill by Lemony Snicket

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Plot Summary

Violet, Klaus and Sunny Baudelaire have been transferred to yet another guardian. However, this time, their prospects seem to be even bleaker than before. Their new guardian, who prefers to be called Sir, insists that the children work in the mill in exchange for his efforts to keep Count Olaf away.

At first, the children rationalize that this bargain, while not entirely fair, may be working. Count Olaf is nowhere to be seen, at least to their eyes. That changes when Klaus is tripped by the mill's foreman and is forced to visit the eye doctor. The building that serves as the eye doctor's office is an exact replica of the tattoo on Count Olaf's left leg, right down to the eyelashes.

When Klaus returns, Violet and Sunny realize that he is not himself and his behavior is very disturbing. The following day, a horrible accident occurs at the mill and the blame is laid on Klaus. He seems to briefly snap back to his senses, but the foreman trips him again, forcing another visit to the eye doctor. The children begin to understand what has happened to Klaus and realize that he had been hypnotized.

Violet and Sunny accompany him this time and they find that the eye doctor, Dr. Georgina Orwell, is a very nice person, but somewhat strange. Her strangeness is explained when Violet and Sunny go into the waiting room and find Count Olaf disguised as a receptionist named Shirley. However, he doesn't try to capture them immediately and Klaus is released along with them.

When they return to the mill, they find a memo from Sir stating that if another accident occurs, he will be forced to give them up. By happy chance, he has found a woman in town who would be thrilled to adopt three children. The woman is, of course, Shirley. Suddenly, Count Olaf's plan becomes clear.

Violet can't seem to get Klaus back to normal and spends the night researching hypnosis in the mill's pathetic library. Of the three books found in the library, the one by Dr. Georgina Orwell seems to be their only hope. Unfortunately, it is written in extremely difficult language and Violet is no master of vocabulary.

The next day, a horrible accident is staged at the mill and it is up to the Baudelaire children to thwart the accident before someone is killed. They'll need to switch their strengths to come out on top of Count Olaf's scheme. Violet will need to learn to be a researcher and Klaus will have to become an inventor.

Will the Baudelaire children be able to surmount this latest obstacle from Count Olaf, or has he finally found a way to beat them and steal their fortune?



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

Mr. Poe and the Baudelaires, Violet, Klaus and Sunny, are on their way to the children's new guardian. After the dismal failure of their previous guardian, the children do not know what to expect from this new adventure. They are traveling by train to a small town called Paltryville. Paltryville is a good name for this town. There are no attractions or anything particularly special about the place. It is, in a word, a paltry town.

The children gaze out at the Finite Forest as the train nears their destination. Violet is trying to concentrate on inventing a device that will allow someone to climb even the tallest tree and her hair is pulled back with a ribbon to help her think. Klaus watches the floor of the forest as the train passes by, wondering what kind of moss can be found in there. Sunny is opening and closing her mouth, thinking of things that she may be able to bite when they arrive.

The Finite Forest is gloomy, but Mr. Poe does not share this opinion. He tries to engage the children in conversation as Paltryville looms in the distance. He has recently been promoted to Vice President in Charge of Coins at his bank, Mulctuary Management and informs the children that this promotion will keep him busier than ever. He then informs them that if this new guardian doesn't work out, they will be sent to boarding school. The Baudelaires try to find out the name of their new guardian, but Mr. Poe is of little help. The name is impossible to pronounce and he gives up trying. All he will tell the children is that their new guardian owns the Lucky Smells Lumbermill in Paltryville.

The train pulls into the station, but Mr. Poe does not get out. Since the train only goes to Paltryville once a day, he cannot get off or he would miss a day's work. He does his best to assure the children that their new guardian is aware of Count Olaf and his numerous associates and will take steps to protect them from the evil man's clutches. The children are then left all alone with directions on how to get to the lumbermill.

Paltryville is deserted and has only one street, which makes the lumbermill very easy to find. Instead of the usual trees lining the street, enormous stacks of newspapers teeter along the road. The sign on the gate of the lumbermill looks strange from a distance and its appearance does not improve as the children walk up to it. The letters for Lucky Smells Lumbermill are comprised entirely of pre-chewed gum.

The children then realize that there are worse things to look at than signs made of gum as Violet notices another building across the street. It is shaped and painted to look like an eye; in fact, it looks exactly like the eye that is tattooed on Count Olaf's left ankle. Violet and Klaus do their best to convince each other that it cannot be connected to Count Olaf, but they do not succeed.



Chapter 1 Analysis

As in the previous book, Mr. Poe does not accompany the children to introduce them to their new guardian. He explains that he is a busy man, but that is really no excuse for leaving the Baudelaire children so alone. The trepidation they already have for their situation can only be increased by this abandonment.

The new town that the Baudelaires will call home seems dismal and the lumbermill is even worse. A sign made of chewing gum is not common, but as the children will soon learn, there is much about this lumbermill and their new guardian that is uncommon.

The building shaped like an eye is an interesting addition. In the first book, *The Bad Beginning*, the children grew accustomed to his fascination with pictures of this eye and even the door to his house, which had an eye carved into it. However, this did not prepare them to find an entire building that is an exact match for Count Olaf's tattoo and artwork preferences. This can only mean one thing and this thing does not bode well for the Baudelaires.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

When Violet, Klaus and Sunny open the gate to the lumbermill, they find a memo addressed to them from their new guardian. He is nowhere in sight and seems to prefer communicating by letter. The memo states that the Baudelaires will not only be living at the mill, but that they are expected to arrive for work the next day. Their new residence is the employee dormitory.

The Baudelaire children were not prepared to find employment instead of a welcoming home, but they decide to make the best of it. They head to the dormitory and knock on the door, much to the surprise of the employees inside who apparently have never had a visitor. A man named Phil greets them and although he is confused that three children will be working in the mill, he takes it in stride. Phil takes everything in stride, no matter how bad it may be. The children meet the other workers in the dank room. There are no windows, save a drawing of a window on one of the otherwise bare walls.

Phil explains that they are supervised by a foreman, whom they will see everyday. When the children ask what type of person he is and they are greeted with a chorus of discontent. The general consensus is that he is an awful man. The previous foreman mysteriously quit the year before.

The children sit down to share dinner with the workers. Dinner is a casserole that is both lumpy and unpleasant. Everything about their new home seems to be unpleasant. After dinner, the other employees go to bed and the Baudelaires wrestle with their thoughts before finally falling asleep.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Once again, the Baudelaires seem to have found themselves in a bad situation. They will be expected to work at a lumbermill, even though they are only children and their new guardian introduced himself with a memo. This incident is the foreshadowing of more of their dealings with this new guardian.

The dormitory is a reflection of the mill itself. It is a cheerless place where the workers have no sunny outlook on life. In fact, they have no outlook, since there are no windows. Although the children are determined to make the best of these events, that task could strain even the hardest of optimists.

The news of the foreman being replaced unexpectedly is a red flag to the readers. The Baudelaires do not seem to catch on, but they will soon. Hopefully, they will catch on before it is too late.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The Baudelaires are wrenched out of their sleep by a cacophony. Foreman Flacutono has arrived in the dormitory and is banging two pots together to wake everyone up. As the children sleepily get their bearings, they find out that there will be no breakfast and that they have to report to work immediately. Phil introduces the children to the foreman who first refers to them as midgets and then as the Baudeliare's.

Foreman Flacutono is dressed in filthy overalls and is wearing a mask that obscures most of his face. His nose can be seen, bent into the mask. Although he is obviously bald, he wears a strange white wig that has hair shooting out in all different directions, like white worms. His disposition is even worse than his appearance. He intentionally drops his pots and then demands that Violet and Sunny pick them up while Klaus makes their beds. Everyone scurries into the work area of the mill. The Baudelaires' first day is Log Day, which means that new logs have arrived at the mill and must be debarked. This strenuous process requires the use of heavy debarkers that were not designed to be handled by children, let alone children who have not had breakfast.

As Violet and Klaus struggle with their debarkers, Sunny decides to put her teeth to good use instead, slowly chipping away the bark. It is arduous work, punctuated by the loud noises of the mill machinery and Foreman Flacutono's pots. Finally, the bell rings for lunch, but to the surprise of the Baudelaire children, they are each handed one piece of gum and given only five minutes to chew it.

The children discuss this with Phil and ask why they don't have real food for lunch. He informs them that lunch at Lucky Smells always consists of gum. Violet offers to make lunch for the next day, but unfortunately, none of the employees have the money to buy lunch ingredients. It seems that they are only paid in coupons, which are no good, since they do not have the money to buy anything in the first place. As the foreman bangs his pots together to signal the end of the lunch break and tells the Baudelaires that they are to report to the owner of Lucky Smells, Violet, Klaus and Sunny begin to wonder what kind of man their guardian is.

Chapter 3 Analysis

A man that forces children to work in a lumbermill, denies his employees breakfast, offers only gum for lunch and pays them all in coupons does not seem like an ideal guardian for a pet rock, let alone children. Nevertheless, the Baudelaires have once again found themselves at the hands of an unqualified guardian. Foreman Flacutono is another thorn in their side. His use of the word "midgets" and "Baudeliars" is a clue to the reader as to his real identity. Even though he does not resemble Count Olaf, there is some connection.



As the children pass the first half of their day in their new routine it is clear to them that they do not have much to look forward to. The work is hard and not suited to children. The meals are lousy and the foreman is rude and obnoxious. Their situation cannot get any worse. Or can it?



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

As Violet, Klaus and Sunny walk to their new guardian's office, they reflect on how much their lives have changed. They bump into a tall man who recognizes them as the Baudelaires. He cannot believe that the children were working in the mill and thinks that there must have been some sort of misunderstanding. At first, the children think that this man is their new guardian, but he reveals that his name is Charles and that he is their guardian's business partner.

They walk into the office and behold a very short man, wearing a shiny green suit, who is seated behind a desk. A cloud of smoke from a cigar obscures his face. He tells the Baudelaires that he has promised to feed, shelter and protect them from Count Olaf and in exchange, they must work in the mill until Violet comes of age. Charles objects that the mill is no place for children and Violet tries to convince him that Sunny should be exempted from having to work, but he won't hear of it.

Their new guardian believes that working in the mill will teach them responsibility, the value of hard labor and how to make lumber. Klaus interjects that they could read all about these things without ever having to go into the mill and the children find out that, thanks to Charles, the mill has a library. At least things are starting to look up, even if only a little. Before they are dismissed to return to work, Violet asks their new guardian for his name. He tells her that they should call him Sir and that his name is too hard to pronounce anyway. They are dismissed so that Sir can continue his lunch before it gets cold.

As Charles shows them out, he gives them a peach, which they split and offers to help the children. Thinking that he means an offer of real assistance to intercede with Sir to keep them out of the mill, the children become hopeful. However, his offer of assistance extends only to letting them use the library at the mill whenever they want, since asking Sir for anything wouldn't do any good. He leads the children to the library after they finish their peach.

Unfortunately, this isn't much of an offer. Although the library is very beautiful, it has only three books. Sir wouldn't pay for books and so all they have are books that were donated. The titles include *The History of the Lucky Smells Lumbermill*, *The Paltryville Constitution* and *Advanced Ocular Science* by Dr. Orwell. Dr. Orwell is the town's optometrist and the cover of her book matches her office. It contains the drawing of an eye.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The Baudelaires' new guardian is not exactly what they expected. Each one of their guardians had some sort of flaw that made them unsuitable, particularly Count Olaf, but



Sir does not seem to have a clue as to what is proper for children. Forcing small children to work in a mill is not only unsafe, but also cruel. Charles is a bright spot, even though personally he seems rather dim. Like many of the adults the Baudelaires meet, he is well meaning but incompetent. He does not have the guts to stand up to Sir and only offers to help them in meaningless ways.

The library presents a common theme that runs through all of the books in this series. A library is the one place where the Baudelaire children feel at home. However, this library instantly makes them feel ill at ease when they find only three books, one of them bearing the mark of Count Olaf. This book is a foreshadowing of the events that are about to transpire at the Lucky Smells Lumbermill.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The days at the mill wear on and the Baudelaires learn how to work in a lumbermill. After the arduous debarking is completed, the logs must then be sliced into boards. Once this is finished, a string-tying machine is started and the boards are bundled up and tied into groups.

One thing missing from their lives is the inevitable appearance of Count Olaf. For some reason, days have worn by without a single sighting. Violet, Klaus and Sunny begin to think that maybe this time they were able to elude him. They begin to rationalize that even though their work is hard, it is much better than having to fend off Count Olaf's evil plots.

After their lunch break, on one of the string tying days, Violet, Klaus and Sunny get up to go back to work. Klaus's progress is halted as Foreman Flacutono sticks his leg in front of Klaus, tripping him. Klaus's glasses fly off and are irreparably damaged. Charles appears and offers to take Klaus to the eye doctor. Klaus is surprised that there is an eye doctor in such a small town until Charles reveals that the building the children noticed on their first day, the one shaped like an eye, is the office of Dr. Orwell, the town's eye doctor. The children try to prevent Charles from taking Klaus to the building, but he cannot hear their protestations over the machinery in the mill. He leads Klaus out the door and Violet and Sunny watch him go, wondering what will happen next.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The Baudelaires have been lulled into a state of complacency by the absence of Count Olaf. Even though their lives are still pretty miserable, they compare them to how miserable Count Olaf has made them and it doesn't seem so bad. This is about to change.

The cloud of suspicion hovering over Foreman Flacutono thickens after he trips Klaus, necessitating a trip to the building that resembles Count Olaf's tattoo. Is it merely coincidence, or was it a concerted effort on the part of Count Olaf to lull the children into letting their guard down? The answer to this question is about to be revealed, but Violet and Sunny will need every ounce of their combined brainpower to solve the riddle.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

The ever-optimistic Phil tries to comfort Violet and Sunny as they wait for Klaus to return. Dinnertime has long since passed and there is still no sign of their brother. The girls even spend several minutes staring out of the window at the dormitory before realizing it is only a drawing. As the other employees get ready for bed, Phil tries to assure the girls that they have nothing to worry about. However, they can't bring themselves to share this opinion. Soon, the room is filled with the sound of sleeping employees, but not the sound of sleeping Baudelaires.

Finally, the girls decide to wait outside in the courtyard, hoping to get a glimpse of their brother. The dark night is illuminated by a full moon and after a short while, Klaus enters through the gate into the courtyard. The girls are overjoyed to see him, but not all is right with Klaus. He appears dazed and cannot remember anything that happened after Charles dropped him off at the eye doctor's. Violet tries to remind Klaus that he is at the Lucky Smells Lumbermill, but when she does, he falls into silence. She then says that he had better get to bed and he answers her, "Yes, sir."

Completely mystified by his behavior, Violet and Sunny follow their brother into the dormitory, where he lies on the bottom bunk. He immediately falls asleep, leaving Violet to take off his shoes, which he forgot. Although the girls are happy that Klaus has returned, they do not know what to make of his strange behavior.

Chapter 6 Analysis

The optimism of Phil contrasts sharply with the feeling of despair shared by Violet and Sunny. They have been trained to expect the worst in the preceding months and cannot see that this time will be any different. When Klaus finally does return, he acts very strangely, further worrying Violet and Sunny. He does not seem to recognize them, or where they are and responds by saying "Yes, sir." He instantly falls asleep when he is told to and forgets to even take off his shoes.

Something happened to Klaus while he was gone, but will Violet and Sunny be able to get to the bottom of this mystery?



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Morning arrives with the clanging of Foreman Flacutono's pans. Klaus awakes, but does not seem to be in any better state of mind than when he went to bed. He does not know where he is or what happened. The children are interrupted by Foreman Flacutono telling them that Lucky Smells Lumbermill has no room for dawdling. Suddenly, Klaus's eyes go wide and he immediately leaves to dormitory to enter the mill, leaving his shoes behind. Violet calls to Klaus to tell him about his shoes, but he ignores her. Phil prods the girls to follow Klaus and they settle into their work. Violet tries to get Klaus to tell her what is going on but is met with only silence.

After the lunch break, Foreman Flacutono tells Klaus that he will be operating the stamping machine that day. The stamping process comes after the log tying process and is the easiest job for the mill employees. Their only job is to blow on the ink left on the logs from the stamper to get it to dry. Klaus obediently begins operating the large machine and everyone else begins blowing on the letters. This routine is broken by a large crash and a scream. The stamping machine has come down firmly on Phil, instead of the boards. His left leg is broken, but as with everything else, he takes it in stride by saying that although his left leg is broken, at least he is right-legged.

Foreman Flacutono does not share Phil's optimism and begins yelling about how this is the worst accident ever at the mill and that the stamping machine, now broken, will cost an inordinate amount of money to fix. One of the employees asks what inordinate means and Klaus comes out of his stupor to define the word. He is shocked to see what happened and has no memory of the accident.

Foreman Flacutono asks Klaus to pick up his pots and trips him when he does, once again breaking Klaus's glasses. Violet desperately tries to convince the foreman that she can fix them, but he insists that Klaus visit the eye doctor again for a new pair. Violet and Sunny don't want to lose track of Klaus again and they insist on accompanying him. The foreman readily agrees.

Chapter 7 Analysis

Klaus is definitely not himself and the Baudelaire girls are rightly worried. His strange behavior, particularly when the phrase Lucky Smells Lumbermill is spoken aloud, is not normal. Neither is the fact that the foreman asks a child to operate a piece of heavy machinery. When Phil's leg is broken, the foreman uses a large word to describe how expensive the machinery is and this seems to snap Klaus back to himself. However, this won't last long after the foreman trips him, forcing him to go back to the eye doctor.

At least this time the Baudelaires won't be separated as they discover what has happened to Klaus and what is going on at the mill.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

Violet, Klaus and Sunny warily approach the building that looks like an eye. After Klaus's strange behavior, they have no idea what to expect. On the way, Klaus realizes that he must have been hypnotized. He had previously read a book about hypnotism and had been fascinated by past cases. Unfortunately, he skipped over the boring parts, which included how to undo hypnotism. As they near the building, he pledges never again to skip the boring parts of a book.

Dr. Georgina Orwell seems nice enough on the surface. She is not what the Baudelaire girls expected at all. She is a tall, blond woman who wears large, black boots and has a cane with a red jewel on the top. However, she makes a strange comment before taking Klaus back to the examining room. She says that "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar." Confused at her remark, Violet and Sunny enter the waiting room at Dr. Orwell's advice. Inside, they find the answer to all of the mysteries swirling around them. Seated at the desk is a woman with one eyebrow, shiny eyes, a bad wig and a nameplate, which reads, Shirley. However, this doesn't fool Violet and Sunny. Count Olaf has managed to find them again.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The phrase "you can catch more flies with honey than with vinegar" is an excellent summation of this chapter. The children have been unwittingly led into a trap set by their nemesis, Count Olaf. He has been there the whole time, waiting to spring his plan on the unsuspecting children. The doctor's remarks seem to point to the fact that she is working with, or at least cooperating with, Count Olaf. The actions of the foreman, along with previous clues, also reveal that he has been a part of this plan.

With Klaus at the hands of Dr. Orwell and Violet and Sunny trapped with Count Olaf in the waiting room, their chances for escape seem very small. Their only hope is that their guardian promised to protect them from Count Olaf. This promise will be tested all too soon.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

When Violet and Sunny enter the waiting room, they realize exactly what Dr. Orwell meant. Sitting behind a desk is Count Olaf, disguised as a woman named Shirley. The girls immediately see through his disguise and badger him with questions. He calmly agrees with them and maintains a nice demeanor, much to their surprise. After a few verbal volleys, Count Olaf reveals that Sir will be handing the children over to him very soon. This seems impossible at the moment, but the remainder of Count Olaf's plan has yet to be revealed.

Klaus joins the girls in the waiting room and once again, he is acting strangely and his eyes are very wide. He calls Violet Veronica and seems to be in a daze. Dr. Orwell tells them that they can leave and Violet is shocked that they won't be held. The children then return to the mill where they find a typed memo waiting for them. Sir has informed them that if another accident occurs, he will be forced to give them away in adoption to a nice receptionist named Shirley. Suddenly, the full extent of Count Olaf's plan is made clear.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Count Olaf has finally been revealed, much later in the story than one would expect. The complacency the Baudelaires first felt has been replaced with a feeling of horror and insecurity. Their natural inclinations had warned them about Count Olaf and the eye doctor, but they didn't listen. With Klaus being hypnotized, there is no way that they can prevent another accident from occurring, which will land them right into the hands of Count Olaf.

Once again, the children seem to be the only ones who can see past Count Olaf's disguise. Will the children be able to thwart Count Olaf's plan, or has he finally found a way to beat them?



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

The Baudelaires enter the dormitory and Violet reads the memo again. She decides to go talk to Sir and leaves her brother in the care of Phil after getting him to promise to keep an eye on him. Violet and Sunny knock on Sir's door and are greeted by the surly man who tells them they have to have an appointment to see him. Violet protests that it is important and he tells her that he will decide what is important. She tells him that she can explain what has been going on and he lets them into the office.

Charles is in the office and looks on as Violet launches into her explanation that Dr. Orwell is hypnotizing Klaus to cause the accidents at the mill and that Shirley is really Count Olaf. Charles believes her but Sir finds her story preposterous. He refuses to help the children and will not let them call Mr. Poe for help. He also tells Violet that he will definitely give them to Shirley if another accident occurs. Charles tries to help, but Sir tells him that his job is to iron his shirts and make his omelets, not to tell him what to do. Violet and Sunny leave the office dejected. Charles offers to help them and at first, Violet thinks it is a real offer of assistance. Unfortunately, his idea of help is to sneak them some raisins for lunch the next day.

The Baudelaires are on their own, once again. Violet looks down the hall as they leave Sir's office and Sunny begins to crawl towards the library.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Sir's refusal to help them, even to allow the children to make a phone call, further reveals just how poor a guardian he really is. Although Violet relates a wild tale, his knowledge of Count Olaf's previous exploits should make him believe that this new plan is possible. However, he simply affirms that he will give the children away to Shirley if they mess up again. The Baudelaires are trapped and running out of time. Will Violet's idea be enough to save them? The one adult who believes them is in a position to help, but will not do so. Charles is too hampered by his fear of Sir to be of any real assistance.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

Violet and Sunny walk into the library and pick up Dr. Orwell's book, *Advanced Ocular Science*. Right away, Violet can tell that she has no easy task in front of her. The book is written in overly complicated language and worse, it is extremely long. Violet goes through the index and finds a chapter on "Hypnosis and Mind Control," on page 927. Thankful that she didn't have to read 926 pages to find the information she needed, she turns right to the chapter. The chapter is just like the beginning of the book and it is almost impossible for Violet to decipher what is contained within.

She wishes that Klaus were there, since he is the researcher of the family and has an enormous vocabulary. Even a dictionary would be helpful, but there aren't any to be found in the under-stocked library. Violet devises a system of replacing all the words she does not understand with the word "hmm." Surprisingly, this method works quite well and she is able to begin to read the book. For several hours, she pours over the chapter, while Sunny sleeps.

Finally, she is able to piece enough information together to be of use. She learns that when a person has been hypnotized, a single word can be used to get them to perform a task. The reverse is also true. When you want to snap someone out of hypnosis, a different word is used to return them to a normal state. The only problem is that Violet has no idea what these two words are. As Violet tries to figure this out, she hears a loud humming coming from the mill. Violet and Sunny sneak into the mill room and find Foreman Flacutono standing next to the rusty saw, which has been turned on. In front of the saw, they see what looks like a log bundled in string. However, it is not a log, it is Charles. Meanwhile, Klaus is at the controls of the saw and Foreman Flacutono orders him to push the log into the saw.

Chapter 11 Analysis

It is definitely not easy for Violet to become a researcher overnight. Klaus has had years of experience reading many different books and learning difficult words. However, if they are to thwart Count Olaf's plan, Violet has to become a researcher. By substituting "hmm" for difficult words, Violet is able to get an idea of what is going on with Klaus. He has obviously been hypnotized and a specific word is being used to control him. Another word is used to release the control. Sadly, even though she figured out the problem, Violet has no idea what these words are. She'll need to listen closely and recall the previous accident in order to solve this mystery in time.

Charles has been tied to the saw and is about to be cut into pieces. It is clear that Count Olaf's plan for an accident will most likely be successful. Sir will not appreciate having his business partner cut into small pieces.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

Klaus begins to push what he thinks is a board into the saw, at the direction of Foreman Flacutono. No amount of screaming or pleading on the part of his sisters will stop him. Finally, Violet recognizes a pattern. Every time Foreman Flacutono tells Klaus to do something, he uses the word "lucky." Violet and the Foreman begin ordering Klaus to push the log away and put it back respectively, each using the word "lucky." This goes on for a few minutes until another voice shouts, "Lucky." Dr. Orwell has entered the mill, with Shirley in tow. She then orders Klaus not to listen to his sister and all of Violet's efforts fail.

Violet begs Dr. Orwell not to allow her brother to do this, but the doctor just laughs. She reveals that Count Olaf agreed to split the Baudelaire fortune with her 50/50 in exchange for her help. Count Olaf reminds her that it is 50/50 after expenses. Meanwhile, the saw blade is getting closer to Charles. Violet does her best to remember what happened the last time that Klaus was un hypnotized after the accident with the stamping machine. Suddenly, she remembers that Klaus became himself after the foreman said that the machine would cost an inordinate amount of money to replace.

Violet screams, "Inordinate!" and Klaus blinks. He has been un hypnotized. Dr. Orwell is surprised that Violet knew that word, but Count Olaf springs into action. There will still be an accident at the mill, even though Klaus has been un hypnotized. Klaus gets off the saw and tries to run over to Violet, but Foreman Flacutono is successful in tripping him for the third time.

As Violet tries to push Charles out of the path of the saw, she is stopped by Count Olaf and Foreman Flacutono. Sunny tries her best to push Charles, but she is not strong enough. With Count Olaf and Foreman Flacutono busy holding Violet, Dr. Orwell is the last of the fiendish players who can finalize their plan. Sunny tries to bite through the string that is binding Charles and Dr. Orwell tries to grab her. Sunny bites her on the hand. Dr. Orwell retaliates by pressing the red jewel at the top of her cane. A sword appears and she yells to Sunny, "En garde!" Sunny has no sword, but she has her four very sharp teeth. The two of them battle while Charles draws even closer to the saw blade.

Klaus is the only one left who can help Charles as the blade begins to slice through his shoes. Klaus tries to think of a way to stop the saw, but his mind is still foggy from being hypnotized. He realizes that he will need to invent something on the spot to stop the saw. Inventing is not Klaus's strong suit and he is at a disadvantage. He looks at the debarkers and chewing gum packs piled near the wall and begins to formulate a plan. He grabs a pack of chewing gum and shoves several sticks into his mouth. Once they are wet, he throws the gooey gob at the saw, but it doesn't make it. Klaus will need to



find a way to get the gum into the saw. Suddenly, he realizes that the debarker could be used to create a quick invention.

Remembering a fishing expedition he once took with his parents, Klaus recalls the process of casting. He chews more pieces of gum to create a sticky sort of fishing line and attaches one end to the debarker. He casts the contraption, but misses the blade, hitting Charles instead. The gum adheres to the string binding Charles. At first, Klaus thinks his invention has failed, but then he realizes it has worked after all. Using all of his newly gained strength from working at the mill, he pulls on the line and Charles is moved out of the path of the saw.

Sunny and Dr. Orwell are in the middle of their swordfight when Sir walks into the room. Surprised, Dr. Orwell backs up, right into the path of the saw.

Chapter 12 Analysis

Dr. Orwell's part in the conspiracy is finally revealed. She is willing to kill someone and endanger three children for money. Her plan to hypnotize Klaus has worked well, until Violet learns the words that will both control and release her brother. Once words fail, Dr. Orwell, Count Olaf and Foreman Flacutono move to action. The only person left out of the struggle is Klaus, who must think quickly and become an inventor almost instantly. By recalling past experiences, he is able to come up with an impromptu fishing pole that works. Charles is saved from danger, but Dr. Orwell moves right into it. Her gruesome death is witnessed by all in the mill, including the Baudelaire children.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Mr. Poe has arrived at the mill after hearing about the accident and joins Charles, Sir and the children in Sir's office. Sir keeps repeating how dreadful it is. The children are still in shock from what they just went through and from watching Dr. Orwell back into a spinning saw. Sir thinks it is unbelievable that Dr. Orwell was really a hypnotist and he thinks Violet was lucky to figure out how to unhypnotize him before Charles was killed. Charles thinks it is unbelievable that Foreman Flacutono grabbed him in the middle of the night and strapped him to the sawing machine and he also thinks that he is lucky Klaus invented a device to save him. Mr. Poe thinks it is unbelievable that Shirley was going to adopt the children to get their fortune, but thinks it is lucky that she has gone back to being a receptionist.

Violet reminds them that Count Olaf is really Shirley, but Sir does not believe her. He still maintains that Count Olaf is not in Paltryville because he has been on the lookout for him. Charles convinces Sir to go see Shirley, since the children seem so convinced. Sir agrees and leads them to the library where he has Phil keeping an eye on Shirley and Foreman Flacutono inside. Sir makes a crack that the library has finally become useful, as a jail. Violet reminds him that the library was very useful in helping her learn how to stop Dr. Orwell and Count Olaf. Sir agrees and tells her that they will do very well at boarding school since they are so bright. Mr. Poe asks what he means and Sir tells him that since he kept his end of the bargain to keep Count Olaf away and the children reneged on their end, he will no longer be offering them a place to live.

They arrive at the door of the library and find Phil standing guard. He has been reading the Paltryville Constitution and tells Sir that it is not legal to pay employees with coupons. Sir brushes him aside and everyone walks into the library. At first, Shirley and Foreman Flacutono try to convince everyone that they were hypnotized by Dr. Orwell and forced to help her take the children's fortune. Sir buys their story and tries to convince Mr. Poe to let Shirley have the kids. The children protest and Mr. Poe tells her that the children believe she is Count Olaf. She offers to show him her nameplate as proof, but he asks to see her left ankle instead. Shirley protests that it is not polite to look at a woman's legs, but Mr. Poe insists. Of course, there is a tattoo on her left ankle and Count Olaf's true identity is finally proven to the adults.

Mr. Poe tells Count Olaf that he is under arrest and tells him to take off his disguise. Foreman Flacutono takes off his disguise as well and it is revealed that he is the bald man who is Count Olaf's associate. As Mr. Poe details the charges against Count Olaf, the count picks up Dr. Orwell's book and comments on how useful it was for the children and how useful it will be for him. He throws the book through the window and he and his associate jump out and run away. Sir yells out the window that they should not come back, because the Baudelaires won't be there.



Then, Mr. Poe reminds Sir that he has broken his end of the bargain, but Sir won't be reasoned with. He wants the children gone no matter what. Even Charles tries to help, but it doesn't do any good. Violet reminds the adults that they really should call the police and talk about where they will go later. Mr. Poe leaves to make a call, which is, of course, too late. The children apologize to Charles and Phil for what happened to them and then the children reflect on just how lucky they really are. They are alive and they still have each other.

Chapter 13 Analysis

As the fourth book in this series draws to a close, we have the usual scene. The adults are incredulous and the children do their best to get them to capture Count Olaf. As always, he ends up getting away.

Even though they are on their way to boarding school and they have just witnessed a hideous death by saw, the children realize that they are truly lucky. It was lucky that Klaus was able to invent something to save Charles's life, it was lucky that Violet was able to research hypnotism to save Klaus and Sunny was extremely lucky not to be killed in a swordfight.

The children reflect for a moment and realize that even when things are at the worst, the fact that they are together makes it seem better. They are lucky to be alive, at least for now. Their future does not seem too bright with Count Olaf on the loose and a new boarding school awaiting them. If the next book is anything like the preceding four, the children are in for another unfortunate adventure.



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, she 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. This promise is thoroughly tested in *The Miserable Mill*. Violet's skills as an inventor will not help her as she tries to figure out how to save her brother and evade the clutches of Count Olaf. Violet is forced to become a researcher in *The Miserable Mill* and has to tackle a book that is far above her reading skill level to find the answer. She devises a system of replacing words she does not understand with the word "Hmmm" and does her best to piece the words she does understand together. This method surprisingly pays off and she learns the answer to their problem.

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. Klaus 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.

The library at the Lucky Smells Lumbermill is very disappointing to Klaus. It has only three books, none of which look to be interesting. However, one of these books will play an important role in getting them out of a predicament, but it won't be up to Klaus to read it.

Klaus's idiosyncrasy is his ability to research problems thoroughly and pour through complicated books with ease. His vocabulary is quite large and he is often better read than the adults in the story. This knowledge and his ability to find information are not much use in this story, as Klaus is being controlled mentally by Count Olaf.

After he recovers from his first bout with hypnosis, Klaus remembers a book he read on the subject. Unfortunately, he skipped over all of the boring parts and as such, he has



no idea on how to undo hypnosis. He swears never to do this again, but in the meantime, the task of figuring this problem out is left to Violet.

Klaus has to develop his skill as an inventor in order to save Charles from being sliced into boards. His time spent with Violet has taught him quite a bit and assists him in finding a quick answer to the problem.

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.

At the mill, Sunny is unable to use the debarking tools and is forced to use her teeth instead. They appear to be up to the challenge even though the work is much too difficult for a normal infant. Her teeth will be even more instrumental at the end of the story. Sunny gets to show that her siblings are not the only brave Baudelaires. She is forced to enter into a swordfight with Dr. Orwell and her only weapon is her teeth. She manages to successfully parry each sword thrust, allowing the other Baudelaires the time they need to stop Count Olaf's plot.

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.

Mr. Poe

Mr. Poe is a family friend of the Baudelaires and is the banker who is 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. He 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.

Mr. Poe 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. Once again, he has managed to find the Baudelaire children a horrible guardian named Sir. He does not seem to notice that the man is forcing the children to work in a lumbermill and does not do his best to keep checking on their welfare. In the end, his inaction leads to yet another escape by Count Olaf.



Count Olaf/Shirley

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 Miserable Mill*, Count Olaf disguises himself as a woman named Shirley who works for Dr. Orwell as a receptionist. Even though he has on fake nails and a wig, Violet sees right through his disguise. However, once again, the adults do not notice that Shirley is really a man and a man that they were supposed to protect the Baudelaires from.

Count Olaf has thought up a brilliant plan this time and has managed to work out a way to adopt the Baudelaires after a series of accidents at the mill. His zeal for the Baudelaires' fortune has not dimmed with his past failures to obtain it. In fact, he wants their money more than ever and will stop at nothing to win. He manages to convince Dr. Orwell to join in his murderous plot, even though she is not one of his associates.

He almost pulls it off, but the children are able to thwart his efforts by banding together and combining their strengths.

However, Count Olaf is able to fool Sir and Mr. Poe right up to the end and has just enough time to escape with his associate before being captured. Count Olaf is a despicable man and seems to have an enormous amount of resources at his disposal to make the lives of the Baudelaire children absolutely miserable.

The Bald Man/Foreman Flacutono

In *The Miserable Mill*, the bald man is disguised as Foreman Flacutono. The previous foreman of the mill disappeared mysteriously and he has taken over his position, much to the dismay of the workers at the Lucky Smells Lumbermill. His disguise consists of a strange white wig and a surgical mask. Inside the mask, you can see his long nose that is crammed inside, resulting in his nose being bent into a strange shape. His disposition hasn't improved since the last time the children saw him and he seems to enjoy being very cruel.

Foreman Flacutono intentionally trips Klaus several times so that Klaus will have to go to the eye doctor to fix his glasses. Even though Klaus is just a child and he is an adult, this does not seem to bother him. This lack of feeling and his association with Count Olaf show just how bad a person he really is. He attempts to continue his deception, right up until the end, when he is finally unmasked. He escapes with Count Olaf before they can be captured and it is certain that this meeting will not be the last for the Baudelaires.



Charles

Charles is a tall man and has a very nice disposition. He is also very meek, a trait which is exploited by his business partner, Sir. He is very nice to the Baudelaire children and sneaks them food when he can, but his help ends there. Like most of the adults in this series, he is a very ineffectual person. Even though he means well and tries to make people's lives better with small things, he overlooks the big problems.

For example, even though Charles does not feel that the Baudelaires should be working in the mill, he refuses to convince Sir of this point. Instead, he provides the children with snacks. He wants a library to help the employees of the mill, while overlooking the fact that they are paid only in coupons, which is illegal.

Charles is nearly killed in the book and does finally help the Baudelaires in a palpable way by convincing Sir that the children may be right that Count Olaf is really Shirley. This is about the extent of his help to the Baudelaires even though they save his life.

Sir

Sir is the Baudelaires' new guardian and the owner of the Lucky Smells Lumbermill. He is a short man, who seems to favor shiny suits. The Baudelaires never see his face, which is obscured by cigar smoke. He has a very abrasive personality and believes that he is always right.

In addition to forcing the children to work in the mill, Sir does not provide his employees with lunch or pay. Instead they are given one stick of gum every day and coupons when they have finished their work. This illustrates the type of man that Sir is. He believes in hard work and responsibility, but does not want to provide payment for these services.

Sir has promised to protect the Baudelaires from Count Olaf while they are at the mill, but is not able to do so. In fact, he offers them in adoption to Count Olaf when he is disguised as Shirley. He blames the Baudelaires for the mill accidents, even though they were set up by Count Olaf. Even in the end, he will not admit that he did not keep his end of the bargain.

Phil

Phil is one of the employees at Lucky Smells. He is a very nice man and is extremely optimistic. Whenever something bad occurs, he always finds something good to say. Even when his leg is crushed in an accident, instead of screaming in pain, he says that at least it wasn't the leg he favors. He is somewhat more helpful to the Baudelaire children than Charles and assists them in keeping Count Olaf locked up after Mr. Poe arrives. Phil seems to genuinely care for the children and does his best to make them feel at home in the dormitory. Even though he is ineffectual, he does no actual harm to the Baudelaire children.



Dr. Georgina Orwell

Dr. Orwell is an optometrist in Paltryville. She is blond, very tall and favors heavy boots. She has a cane with a red jewel on the top that conceals a sword that she uses on Sunny. Her name is a play on the famous author, George Orwell. Her office is shaped and painted to resemble a large eye, which matches Count Olaf's tattoo. Even the book that she donated to the Lucky Smells library has a picture of an eye on the cover. Dr. Orwell's association with Count Olaf is not clear. It would seem, due to her propensity to use the sign of the eye in her office and on her book, that she was somehow involved with him before he came to Paltryville.

Dr. Orwell hypnotizes Klaus and forces him to cause accidents at the mill so that Sir will give the children in adoption to Count Olaf. She has worked out a deal to split their fortune with the Count, but does not succeed. After holding a sword fight with Sunny, she is killed by the saw that was intended to slice Charles into little pieces.

Her book is very useful in helping Violet figure out how to un-hypnotize Klaus and it is ironic that the book Dr. Orwell donated to the library proved to be her undoing.



Objects/Places

Futile Forest

The Baudelaire children see this forest through their train windows as they travel to Paltryville. The trees in the forest are very strange and do not have any leaves. Instead, they look like pipes sticking up in the air.

Paltryville

Paltryville is located near the Futile Forest. It is a small, cheerless town that is home to a post office, the Lucky Smells Lumbermill and Dr. Orwell's office. Not much else is mentioned about the town, other than instead of trees, they have stacks of newspapers lining the streets.

Paltryville Post Office

The post office is located across the street from the Lucky Smells Lumbermill. Instead of a flag, there is an old shoe hanging from the flagpole.

The Lucky Smells Lumbermill

The location for much of the story. The mill is owned by Sir, who is partners with Charles in the venture. Several employees stay in a dormitory at the mill. There is a long wooden fence that stretches down the street, which encloses the mill itself, the dormitory and a courtyard.

Dr. Orwell's Office

This office is shaped and painted like an eye. It is located at the end of the street, across from the mill. Count Olaf poses as a secretary at this office and Dr. Orwell hypnotizes Klaus inside.

Lucky Smells Library

This is a very nice library with many shelves and comfortable chairs. However, the shelves are empty, except for three donated books. Sir would not provide funding for actual books to go into the library.

Dormitory

The employees of Lucky Smells all stay in one dormitory. It is a grey, windowless room full of bunk beds and a table. The overall atmosphere is very cheerless.

The Mill Room

The mill room is full of several different machines, including saws, a stamping machine and a tying machine. The work at Lucky Smells is done in here and it is also the location of a horrible accident and a gruesome death.



Themes

Optimism

Several examples of optimism are given throughout the book, but one character in particular is an accomplished optimist. Phil, one of the employees at Lucky Smells can find the good in everything, no matter how small it is. Even when he is in great pain, he can find something good in the situation.

The Baudelaires try to be optimistic about their new guardian even though it is very difficult. They try to put their situation into perspective by rationalizing that even though they are miserable, they don't immediately see Count Olaf. By comparing the bad to the really bad, they are able to find some good. This optimistic outlook does not pay off, as the children are lulled into complacency. They find Count Olaf where they least expected to because they ignored the signs that were all around them.

Putting things into perspective is a healthy thing to do, but not when it causes you to overlook something important. When the Baudelaires saw the building shaped like an eye, they should have immediately told their guardian. However, since this is *The Series of Unfortunate Events*, it would not have mattered much since the adults in the story rarely listen to the children anyway.

As the story ends, the Baudelaires do realize that they have some things to be optimistic about, but they extend only to each other. Since they are not able to trust the adults around them, they instead trust in themselves and realize that they can at least be optimistic when dealing with each other.

Versatility

This book calls for two of the children to completely switch their natural roles. Violet is always the inventor and Klaus is always the researcher. The events they face this time turn the tables on the children and they both have to learn quickly to compensate. When Klaus is hypnotized, Violet must tackle a difficult book to find the answer on how to get him back to normal. For Klaus, this would have been an easy task. He has a large vocabulary and is an accomplished reader. Violet however, has spent the majority of her time learning to invent things and has not taken the time to learn many complicated words. She has to remember the things that Klaus has said in the past and work her way through a book full of words she does not understand.

When Violet is being held in the mill, it is up to Klaus to invent something that will save Charles. Like Violet, Klaus has immersed himself in doing what he likes, so he is not immediately equipped to handle the situation. By placing himself in Violet's shoes, he is able to come up with his own invention, on the spot and it actually works. Sunny is not called to be particularly versatile, but she is still able to use her teeth to assist her in the swordfight with Dr. Orwell. Count Olaf shows his versatility in this story by disguising



himself as a woman. He manages to fool the adults, but the children know him too well to be taken in by his disguise.

Work Ethic

Sir is a hard man, one who believes in the necessity of difficult, manual labor. His experiences as a child have shaped him into the man he is today, a man that pays his employees in coupons, gives them only gum for lunch and forces children to work in a mill. He feels that the experience of working in the mill will give the children a work ethic, even though they are much too young to do so. Sir does not seem to consider the dangers that are inherent to large machinery and small children. When his partner, Charles, mentions that the children should be treated like family, he replies that some of his cousins live in the dormitory.

The employees of Lucky Smells have a strange work ethic. They are content to work for a man that deprives them of lunch and pays them only in coupons. The work at the mill is hard, yet they do not complain. Even though they have no money and the coupons are a slap in the face, they accept them and continue to do their work. The Baudelaire children are already very responsible for their ages and fall into work at the mill quite well. They do what is expected of them and they try not to complain, even though the work is not suited to their size and they are deprived of food.

Mr. Poe has a strong work ethic and his ethic tends to make the Baudelaires more miserable. Instead of introducing the children to their new guardian, he stays on the train so he won't miss a day at work. In the previous story, he did the same thing when he dropped them off at their Aunt Josephine's. Conversely, Count Olaf has no work ethic, unless it is a means to an immediate end. He prefers to spend his time chasing after the Baudelaires to steal their fortune instead of getting a real job.

Complacency

Complacency and safety tend to go hand in hand. Once the Baudelaire children begin to feel safe from Count Olaf at the mill, they become complacent. They stop looking for him in every direction and settle down into the routine of the mill. The other employees at the mill are complacent as well. They are not paid well and have no money, yet they continue to do their jobs. Instead of finding a new job that actually paid or provided food, they are content to stay at the mill. The reasoning behind this is not revealed, such as an inability to find work elsewhere, or a lack of available jobs. The complacency of the adults is further revealed when Count Olaf escapes, yet again. They do nothing to stop him and watch him and his associate run away.

Mr. Poe is complacent in the sense that he does not take an active role in protecting the children from Count Olaf. He is continually placing the Baudelaires with guardians who are unable to provide them with the very basics of life, such as shelter, food, education and security. In the past, his actions kept the children from developing complacency, but this changes at the mill. Why does this change? The Baudelaires are not necessarily

comfortable. The work is hard, their new guardian is unfriendly and cruel and the adults at the mill do not offer them much help. The reason that they develop complacency is that their perceptions have been altered by Count Olaf. They have become so used to running from him and living in substandard conditions that even the horrible conditions at the mill seem better to them.

Style

Point of View

The Miserable Mill 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 an idea of how the story will unfold. This is a departure from the previous books in this series.

Setting

The story begins with a train ride through the Finite Forest and introduces the reader to a new location for the series. The Finite Forest is extremely dull and strange, having trees shaped like pipes, with no leaves. *The Miserable Mill* is set in the Lucky Smells Lumbermill and the town of Paltryville. The name of the town and its description set the tone for the story. It is a grim place, lacking in cheer and extremely dull.

The events that take place in the mill are at first dull as well. The everyday tasks of the mill, such as debarking logs, sawing and stamping are explained. The mill is located across from a building that is shaped like an eye. This is the office of Dr. Georgina Orwell and the site of Klaus's hypnotism. It has also served as a hiding place for Count Olaf, right under the children's noses.

As always, there is a library in the Baudelaires' new home and this provides an oasis for the children. They feel at home in a library, even one as pathetic as this one and it gives them some sense of stability.

The mill serves as the location for the final climax of the story and the equipment is used to create a horrible accident. Only by using the setting to their advantage are the Baudelaires able to avert this accident.

Language and Meaning

The names of locations in this series typically describe something bleak or hopeless. *The Miserable Mill* is no exception. The name of the town in the book is Paltryville and it



is a paltry place. There are no windows on the buildings and no cheer to be found anywhere.

The name of the foreman is also quite interesting, Flacutono. The explanation for the choice of this name will be revealed in a later book and for now, we are left to wonder why it was used. Each book has had an exotic name like this, such as Dr. Lucafont and Al Funcoot.

Clichés are also used heavily in this book, such as quiet as mice. The author points out that mice are really not that quiet and changes the description to as quiet as mimes.

When Klaus is hypnotized, a word is given that will immediately render him under the control of anyone who utters it. Likewise, a word is given that will break this hold on Klaus's mind. The first word, "Lucky," is quite simple and is used because of the name of the mill itself. The word that breaks the hold is inordinate and is selected by Dr. Orwell because of its difficulty. Little did she know that Violet was about to improve her vocabulary.

The language Sir uses with the children is very formal and illustrates that he views them as employees and not as his wards. He treats them like he would any other employee and issues memos when he wants to tell them something.

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 adds 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 as they go to their latest destination, a boarding school.

and and

Quotes

"Other than a sign I saw once that said, 'Beware' in letters made of dead monkeys, the 'Lucky Smells Lumbermill' sign was the most disgusting sign on earth." Chapter 1, p. 12.

"But Mr. Poe didn't say anything about working in the lumbermill," Violet said. "I thought we were going to live here." Chapter 2, p. 18.

"No one has knocked on this door," he said finally, "for fourteen years." Chapter 2, p. 21.

"I heard we'd have some new workers," the foreman said, dropping the pots to the floor with a clatter, "but nobody told me they'd be midgets." Chapter 3, p. 31.

"You'd better eat your gum," Phil said, moving over to sit next to the children. "It's not very filling, but it's the only thing they'll let you eat until dinnertime." Chapter 3, p. 41.

"It will teach them responsibility. It will teach them the value of work. And it will teach them how to make flat wooden boards out of trees." Chapter 4, p. 54.

"That's the only thing wrong with this library," Charles admitted. "Sir wouldn't give me any money to buy books." Chapter 4, p. 59.

"Well," he said, "this isn't too bad. My left leg is broken, but at least I'm right-legged. That's pretty fortunate." Chapter 7, p. 97.

"I'm never skipping the boring parts of a book again," Klaus said and walked cautiously towards the building. Chapter 8, p. 108.

"I'm afraid you're mistaken," Count Olaf said. "I'm Shirley. See this nameplate?" Chapter 9, p. 117.

"I'll decide what's very important!" Sir barked. "You see this nameplate? It says, 'The Boss' and that's who I am! It's very important when I say it's very important, understand?" Chapter 10, p. 133.

"Of course I didn't look for the tattoo," Sir said impatiently. "It's not polite to look at a woman's legs." Chapter 10, p. 135.

"Shirley is not a receptionist!" she cried. "She's not even Shirley! She's Count Olaf!" Chapter 13, p. 179.



Topics for Discussion

In each of these books, the author encourages and in some cases, implores the reader to put the book down. Why do you think he does this?

The employees at the lumbermill seem resigned to accept coupons for their work, even though this means that they have no money. Why do you think they allow this to continue?

The Baudelaires' new guardian, Sir, has forced the children to work in the lumbermill. Charles tells the children that it is because Sir had a bad childhood. Why do you think that he treats the Baudelaire children in this manner?

Phil's optimism is remarkable. Can you describe three instances where common sense would dictate a different response than the one Phil gives to a situation?

In this book, the author tells the reader that doctors are not children's friends. Describe how you believe that this could create a situation of fear for children who have read this book and then visit their own doctors.

Charles is constantly bullied by Sir, just like the mill employees. Why do you think he continues to allow Sir to boss him around?

Count Olaf's disguise seems to fool everyone but the Baudelaires. Describe why the adults are not able to see past this disguise.

Once again, Mr. Poe allows Count Olaf to escape. Describe his actions and inactions that led to this escape and why you think he allowed it.