

The Reptile Room Study Guide

The Reptile Room by Lemony Snicket

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Plot Summary

The Reptile Room begins with the three Baudelaire orphans, Violet, Klaus and Sunny, traveling to their new guardian's home along Lousy Lane. Their trip is marred by the strong smell of horseradish and their fears about their new guardian. Dr. Montgomery Montgomery turns out to be much more than the children expected. He seems truly excited to have the children share his home and his work as a herpetologist, or snake expert. He has a job for each of the children, as they get ready for their snake-finding expedition to Peru. The Reptile Room, where Uncle Monty keeps all of his specimens, fascinates the children.

The orphans' joy is short-lived, however, as Uncle Monty's new assistant arrives on the job. His name is Stephano, and despite his lack of hair, shaved eyebrow and beard, the children know that he is really Count Olaf, their evil relative who is after their fortune.

Even though the children desperately try to figure out Count Olaf's plan, he is one step ahead of them. Violet, Klaus and Sunny do their best to warn Uncle Monty of the true identity of Stephano, but their warning comes too late. Uncle Monty is found dead in the Reptile Room, an apparent victim of snakebite. Stephano tries to whisk the children off to Peru, but he crashes into Mr. Poe's car before leaving Uncle Monty's house. The children are delighted to see Mr. Poe, but unfortunately, they cannot convince him that Stephano is really Count Olaf.

Dr. Lucafont arrives to examine the body of Uncle Monty and rules that the death was a result of snakebite. However, the children aren't buying this explanation and go to work to reveal Stephano's guilt and his true identity. Klaus researches the type of snake that Dr. Lucafont claims killed Uncle Monty, and Violet goes to work to find some evidence that will link Stephano to the crime. Through their teamwork, they are able to prove that Uncle Monty's death was not an accident and that Stephano is responsible.

Violet is also able to prove the true identity of Stephano by revealing that he has covered his telltale tattoo with makeup. Once Mr. Poe figures it out, Count Olaf begins to plan his escape. Dr. Lucafont offers to take Count Olaf to the police, but Sunny reveals Lucafont's true identity before they can leave. Dr. Lucafont is the hook-handed man, one of Count Olaf's accomplices.

Just when the children seem to have bested their nemesis, Olaf manages to escape, and Mr. Poe refuses to follow him. Once again, the children will be transferred to a new guardian, always fearing that Count Olaf will be lurking in the shadows, following their every move.



Chapter 1

Chapter 1 Summary

The second book in A Series of Unfortunate Events begins with the three Baudelaire orphans, Violet, Klaus and Sunny, traveling on Lousy Lane in Mr. Poe's car. The Grim River runs alongside, and the area boasts a horseradish factory, which makes the entire area smell strongly of horseradish. Along the way, Mr. Poe tells Violet, Sunny and Klaus about their new guardian, Dr. Montgomery. He doesn't seem to know much about their new guardian, except that he is a scientist who travels a great deal.

As the group pulls into Dr. Montgomery's estate, they see strange hedges in the form of snakes in the yard in front of a very nice house. Mr. Poe instructs the children to refer to their new guardian as Dr. Montgomery since his first name is also Montgomery. This strikes the children as somewhat odd, but they hope for the best as Mr. Poe knocks on the door.

Chapter 1 Analysis

Readers pick up with the Baudelaires right where the first book, *The Bad Beginning*, left off. The orphans have successfully defeated their nemesis, Count Olaf, in his plan to steal their fortune. However, this has left them in need of a new guardian. Since the children's first experience with a guardian was so bad, the three orphans are understandably concerned about Dr. Montgomery. They wonder what he will be like and whether he will be a good person another Count Olaf. Since Count Olaf escaped, the orphans are also worried that somehow he'll pop up again. Little do they know just how right they are.



Chapter 2

Chapter 2 Summary

Dr. Montgomery, the Baudelaires and Dr. Poe are in the kitchen of Dr. Montgomery's home. To welcome the children, he has made them a perfect coconut cream cake. Violet, Klaus and Dr. Montgomery enjoy the cake immensely. Sunny and Dr. Poe, however, just pick at their pieces. The children's new guardian asks them to refer to him as "Uncle Monty" instead of Dr. Montgomery.

Violet tells Uncle Monty that Sunny doesn't like soft food, so he gets her a hard carrot, which she enjoys much more. As he gets Sunny her carrot, he tells the children about a snake that prefers hard food to soft, and he reveals the type of work that he does. Dr. Montgomery is a herpetologist, or a scientist who studies snakes.

Mr. Poe asks Uncle Monty what he will do with the children when he goes on his expeditions, and Uncle Monty responds that he needs the children's help. His assistant, Gustav, has mysteriously quit. He is in need of someone to repair the traps he uses to catch snakes, and Violet is just right for the job. He also needs someone to research Peru and all of the different kinds of snakes and reptiles that they may find, which is perfect for Klaus. Even Sunny has a job cutting a long rope into smaller pieces. Mr. Poe leaves after promising to return in a week with their luggage, and the children begin to feel a lot better about their new guardian. They hope that their lives have turned around at last.

Uncle Monty takes the children to the Reptile Room, where they see his many different specimens of live snakes and reptiles as well as his collection of various snake venoms. He describes each one, what each does, which ones are dangerous and which ones are friendly. Uncle Monty promises the Baudelaires that no harm will come to them in the Reptile Room. At the end of the long room is a huge library, which the children are very excited to see.

One cage is covered up with a white cloth, and the children are very curious to see what is inside. Uncle Monty unveils the cage, and an extremely long, black snake is revealed. The snake opens his own cage, slithering over to Sunny. The children ask the name of the snake, which Uncle Monty discovered himself. The snake is called the Incredibly Deadly Viper. Just then, the viper bites Sunny right on the chin.

Chapter 2 Analysis

Uncle Monty is extremely different from Count Olaf, much to the children's delight. He is a warm, kind man, who seems like he will actually take good care of them. The facts that he took the time to bake them a cake and cares about their happiness show that he is much different from their previous guardian.



Each of the children is given a job based on his or her own skills, fitting each one perfectly. The library in Uncle Monty's house is enormous, fulfilling another one of the Baudelaires' favorite needs. Everything seems just about perfect until Sunny is bitten by the Incredibly Deadly Viper.



Chapter 3

Chapter 3 Summary

The children stand in shock after the Incredibly Deadly Viper bites Sunny on the chin. However, she does not appear concerned, and in turn, she bites the viper on the nose. The horrified children look to Uncle Monty, and he reveals that since he discovered the snake, he got to name him. He chose a misnomer, or a name that means the opposite of what the subject is, as a practical joke.

The children are relieved, and Sunny becomes fast friends with the viper. The children get to pick their own rooms, each suited to the child's own personal taste. Violet's room has white paper tacked up on the walls so that she can sketch her invention ideas. Klaus' room has a reading nook with a comfortable chair and a heavy brass lamp. Sunny's room is full of hard objects to bite and has a play area for the viper.

The children's bliss is soon to be interrupted, as Lemony Snicket reveals in this chapter. The author breaks into the narrative to inform the reader that Uncle Monty will soon be dead, and the children will be miserable once more. This is an example of dramatic irony. The reader now knows that something horrible is coming, but the characters do not.

The next week is filled with much joy, and Uncle Monty prepares the children for their upcoming expedition. He tells them all about different snakes and reptiles. One morning, the children find a note from Uncle Monty telling them that he has gone to town, but his new assistant, Gustav's replacement, will be arriving in the interim. The new assistant's name is Stephano.

Shortly after, a cab arrives, and Stephano emerges. He is completely bald, has no eyebrows, sports a very long beard and has a tattoo of an eye on his left ankle. The tattoo removes any doubt from the children's minds. "Stephano" is none other than Count Olaf.

Chapter 3 Analysis

Although the children are very happy, the reader is aware that misfortune is just around the corner. Dramatic irony is not unusual in children's books, but here the narrator comes right out and informs the reader of what is ahead. This is used as a learning tool to teach young readers about dramatic irony and is also a "hook" to keep the reader's interest. The arrival of Stephano is certainly the herald of coming woe. The children catch on to him immediately, but it remains to be seen if the adults will realize his true identity. Readers know for sure that at least one adult, Uncle Monty, is about to meet a bad end.



Chapter 4

Chapter 4 Summary

Stephano tells the children to bring his suitcase inside, and they refuse. After he threatens them, they begrudgingly agree. Klaus wishes that he had the taxi wait or had done something differently, but now the children are stuck with Stephano. Klaus' wish will stay with him for the rest of his life, keeping him up at night.

The children reveal to Stephano that they know who he is and that he hasn't changed at all. He responds by stating that they haven't changed, especially Sunny, who he says still has nine toes instead of ten. Violet and Klaus reply that she most certainly does have ten toes, when they see that Stephano is holding a knife.

Stephano takes his suitcase upstairs, leaving the children alone for a minute. They try to think of something to do, and Uncle Monty pulls up in his jeep. He is full of news about their expedition and the things that he purchased in town. The children try to tell him about Stephano, but he keeps asking them not to interrupt. Violet finally gets a chance to say something when she spots Stephano at the door. He is closest to Klaus and is fingering his knife again. His message is clear, and there is nothing that Violet can do to warn Uncle Monty.

Chapter 4 Analysis

The dramatic irony increases with the return of Uncle Monty. Readers know that he is about to be killed, and it is most likely that Stephano is the future murderer. However, the children are understandably afraid of Stephano, and his continuous threats keep them quiet.

Readers are again introduced to just how despicable Count Olaf really is. For readers that are not familiar with the first book, *The Bad Beginning*, this chapter is a way to bring everyone up to speed. Count Olaf is a man who would stop at nothing to get the Baudelaire fortune, even if it means harming a helpless infant.



Chapter 5

Chapter 5 Summary

The Baudelaires spend a sleepless night wondering what Count Olaf is up to. They consider going to wake him up to reveal the true identity of Stephano, but his bedroom is between their rooms and Uncle Monty's. All night long, he sits in a chair in the doorway of his room playing with his knife.

Finally, dawn comes, and the children go downstairs. For the first time, they dread going to the Reptile Room. They manage to find Uncle Monty alone, and they tell him that they need to tell him something about Stephano. Uncle Monty reveals that he has suspicions of his own, and they go outside to discuss the matter.

Uncle Monty tells the children that he thinks Stephano is a spy from the herpetological society, sent to undermine his discovery of the Incredibly Deadly Viper. The children do their best to tell him the real identity of Stephano, but Uncle Monty does not want to be interrupted. He tells the children that they will not be taking Stephano with them to Peru, and he tears up Stephano's ticket. Their conversation is cut short when a heavy brass lamp from Klaus' room falls and hits Uncle Monty on the shoulder.

The children and Uncle Monty go back inside, and the children run into Stephano. They tell him that they know he is responsible for the lamp, and Klaus reveals Uncle Monty's plan to leave him behind, informing Stephano that Uncle Monty tore up his ticket. Stephano tells the children that plans can change if an accident happens and that accidents are very common.

Chapter 5 Analysis

The children's hope that an adult finally understands their problem with Count Olaf is quickly dashed when Uncle Monty reveals his suspicion that Stephano is a spy from the herpetological society. Once again, a well-meaning adult can't seem to grasp the children's situation. Count Olaf is obviously aware of the children's talk with Uncle Monty and attempts to kill him with a brass lamp from Klaus' room. Although this attempt fails, his declaration that accidents happen all the time is ominous, and his true plans will soon be revealed.



Chapter 6

Chapter 6 Summary

Uncle Monty, Stephano and the three Baudelaires go to see Zombies in the Snow at the end of the day. The children are very quiet, and Uncle Monty can't seem to engage them in a discussion. When they arrive back home, Violet, Klaus and Sunny go upstairs to their rooms without a word to Uncle Monty. The children decide to spend the night in one room, since staying up with each other is better than staying up by themselves. They do their best to figure out what Stephano has planned, but they come up empty.

The next morning arrives, and Stephano knocks on their door. He tells them to get ready to leave for Peru, since he wants to get to the ship early. The children tell him that he is definitely not going with them. Stephano suggests that they go down to the Reptile Room and ask Uncle Monty themselves.

The whole house is silent as the children go down to the Reptile Room. It is not quite light out yet, and it is hard to make out the cages in the room. The children see a shapeless mass at the end of the room, and horrified, they discover it is Uncle Monty. He is very pale and has two marks on his face, which appear to be from snakebite. He is also quite dead.

Chapter 6 Analysis

This is a very dark chapter, especially considering how traumatic it would be for three children to discover that their guardian is dead. Although the children tried very hard to figure out what Stephano had planned, they had no idea that it would result in the murder of their guardian.

Is Stephano to blame? The readers, and the children, certainly have cause to suspect him. He has threatened the children with the premise that accidents happen all the time, and sure enough, a terrible accident seems to have occurred. Uncle Monty has kept his promise that no harm would come to the children in the Reptile Room, but unfortunately, great harm has come to Uncle Monty.



Chapter 7

Chapter 7 Summary

Stephano joins the children in the Reptile Room and feigns surprise over Uncle Monty's death. The children don't believe him and accuse him of killing their guardian. He tells them that it is obvious that Uncle Monty died of snakebite and was not murdered. Then, he tells them to hurry up.

The children threaten to call the police, and Stephano becomes quite angry. He threatens the children again with his knife, and they reluctantly follow him to the door. As they leave the house, Violet regrets not speaking to Uncle Monty the night before and wonders if they even thanked him for taking them to the movies. Violet is forced to carry Stephano's suitcase to Uncle Monty's jeep, and the children get in. Violet sits in the front seat next to Stephano, while Klaus and Sunny take the backseat.

Just when the children are about to give up hope of escaping before Stephano takes them to Peru, the jeep crashes into another car. To the delight of the Baudelaires, the other driver is none other than Mr. Poe. He was rushing to Uncle Monty's house to bring them their suitcases before they left for Peru.

Stephano hurriedly explains that they are in a rush to get to Peru and that they are all very distraught over the death of Uncle Monty. He uses the excuse that they were on the way to find a doctor when Mr. Poe ran into them. He keeps calling Mr. Poe by the wrong name, such as Mr. Foe and Mr. Toe, greatly irritating Mr. Poe.

As the adults try to decide how everyone will get back to the house to call a doctor, the children refuse to ride with Stephano. They try to explain to Mr. Poe that Stephano is really Count Olaf in disguise, but he thinks that is too far-fetched. Violet and Klaus tell Mr. Poe that Stephano even has the same tattoo as Count Olaf on his left ankle. Mr. Poe asks Stephano to show him his ankle, and to the dismay of the Baudelaires, no tattoo is visible.

Chapter 7 Analysis

The depths of depravity within Count Olaf are revealed, as the true nature of Uncle Monty's death becomes clear. In the first book of the series, Count Olaf tried to marry Violet Baudelaire, but now he has apparently sunk to murder. The bad fortune of the Baudelaires also seems to be deepening as they are forced into Uncle Monty's jeep to leave for Peru. The sudden return of Mr. Poe at first seems to be the solution to the children's problems, but once again, he is of absolutely no help when it comes to stopping Count Olaf's plans. When the children finally get Mr. Poe to agree to look at Stephano's ankle, they are dismayed when the tattoo seems to have disappeared. It looks as though Count Olaf is more than one step ahead of the Baudelaires this time.



Chapter 8

Chapter 8 Summary

As the Baudelaire children walk back to the house with Mr. Poe, they try to convince him that Stephano is really Count Olaf in disguise. They are interrupted by the sudden arrival of Dr. Lucafont, who Stephano has apparently called in. He is a thin man with strangely solid hands. The children are amazed that a doctor could arrive so quickly, and he tells them that time is of the essence. Stephano appears in the doorway with a pot of coffee, and Dr. Lucafont asks for a cup. This surprises Mr. Poe, especially after the doctor just said that time was of the essence.

Mr. Poe joins Stephano in a cup of coffee and apologizes for the rudeness of Violet and Klaus. Stephano replies that the children are just upset about the murder of Uncle Monty and that it is quite understandable. Violet catches his slip of using the word "murder" and calls him on it, but he manages to explain it away.

Stephano tries to get Mr. Poe to let him take the children while Mr. Poe rides with Dr. Lucafont, but the children do their best to avoid being left alone with Stephano. Since Mr. Poe's car is ruined, they will have to figure out how to get everyone into town with just Uncle Monty's jeep and the doctor's car.

Dr. Lucafont returns and reports that Uncle Monty's death was the result of snakebite, and he claims that he has found the venom of the Mamba du Mal snake in Uncle Monty's bloodstream. He also claims that the snake must have let itself out of its cage, bitten Uncle Monty and then locked itself back up, which is, of course, preposterous.

Klaus gets angry when Dr. Lucafont begins eating a can of peaches that Uncle Monty bought for their trip to Peru, and Mr. Poe asks the children to excuse themselves. Violet agrees, to Klaus' surprise. Just as Klaus will always regret not telling the taxi driver to wait, Violet will look back with pride on this decision, knowing that leaving at this moment allows them a chance to uncover the mystery of Uncle Monty's death. Klaus and Sunny follow Violet to the Reptile Room, wondering what she is up to now.

Chapter 8 Analysis

The arrival of Dr. Lucafont is very strange, and his physical description is unique. Particular attention is paid to his solid hands, which is certainly an odd characteristic. The speed with which he arrives is very suspicious, as is his behavior before examining Uncle Monty.

Once again, an adult fails the Baudelaire children when they try to convince Mr. Poe that even though Stephano may not have a visible tattoo on his ankle, he is still Count Olaf. The mention of Violet Baudelaire looking back with pride on her actions at this particular stage of the story is interesting. First, it is very revealing when weighed

against the remaining books of the series. Since she is able to look back at this moment in future years, she at least must survive Count Olaf's many attempts to steal their fortune.

The Reptile Room has an introspective tone, especially in reference to the Baudelaire children. As they grow up, they begin to realize more of the implications of their actions. Klaus regrets not asking the taxi driver to wait, and Violet wishes that they had said something, anything, to Uncle Monty before his death. Their thoughts show a great deal of maturation on the part of the Baudelaire children as they go through this series of unfortunate events.



Chapter 9

Chapter 9 Summary

Dr. Lucafont has removed Uncle Monty's body, but the children do not enjoy being in their once loved Reptile Room. Violet reveals her plan to her siblings and asks Klaus to do all the research he can on the Mamba du Mal while she tries to figure out how Stephano killed Uncle Monty.

Violet decides to search Stephano's room, leaving Sunny at the door of the Reptile Room with orders to bite anyone who enters. Violet stops at the kitchen to listen in on the adults, dropping her ribbon on the floor in case she gets caught. She plans to claim she was just picking up the ribbon, a trick that has served her well in the past when she eavesdropped on her parents. The adults are trying to figure out how everyone will get to town.

Stephano's room looks much like Count Olaf's tower. It is filthy, and he has even blown his nose on the curtains. However, Violet is not able to find any evidence in his room to connect Stephano with Uncle Monty's murder. She returns to the Reptile Room after listening in on the adults in the kitchen again. They are still trying to figure out the seating arrangements for the children.

When Violet returns to the Reptile Room, Klaus tells her that the Mamba du Mal kills its victims by strangulation, leaving them covered in dark bruises. At first, Violet does not want to hear about how Uncle Monty died, but Klaus reminds her that he was very pale, not bruised.

The children remember that Uncle Monty kept a cabinet full of snake venom and deduct that Stephano must have injected him with the venom using a syringe. Mr. Poe walks in to inform the children of their seating arrangements. They try to explain that Uncle Monty did not die of snakebite, but Mr. Poe doesn't listen.

Mr. Poe leaves to call the Herpetological Society to take the reptiles away, giving the Baudelaires a few more minutes to uncover Stephano's guilt in Uncle Monty's death. Violet realizes that the evidence must be in Stephano's suitcase and instructs Klaus on what to do when the adults get back. She asks him to create a diversion, to give her more time to find out what is inside Stephano's suitcase.

Chapter 9 Analysis

Klaus' researching skills come in handy in figuring out how Uncle Monty was killed, but so far Violet has come up empty on her end. However, her inventing skills will soon be necessary as she tries to figure out how to get into Stephano's suitcase. If any question remains as to Stephano's true identity, it is wiped away when Violet enters his room. He is just as filthy and unsanitary as Count Olaf, even blowing his nose on the drapes.

Klaus is left to come up with a diversion as the children run out of time, but will he be able to pull it off? This time, Sunny's skills will come to the rescue.



Chapter 10

Chapter 10 Summary

Klaus puts his diversion into play, and Sunny begins to scream on cue. Her siblings, since they know her so well, know that her scream is fake, but the adults do not. Everyone rushes into the reptile room to see what is going on. The adults find Sunny in the clutches of the Incredibly Deadly Viper, and Mr. Poe begins to panic. He hops up and down, babbling, while Dr. Lucafont and Stephano watch the snake. The Incredibly Deadly Viper bites Sunny, and Mr. Poe goes into a meltdown.

Stephano interrupts Mr. Poe's panic by revealing that the viper is in fact harmless, something that he claims that he discovered in his research on snakes. Klaus catches Stephano in his lie, since Stephano previously claimed not to have any knowledge of snakes.

Chapter 10 Analysis

Stephano's plan is beginning to unravel, as he makes the mistake of revealing the extent of his knowledge on snakes. More of Mr. Poe's personality is revealed in this chapter as well, as he panics when he sees Sunny in the clutches of the Incredibly Deadly Viper. Mr. Poe's reaction shows that he truly does care for the children, even if he is constantly putting them in danger through his inaction. Stephano and Dr. Lucafont don't seem to be incredibly concerned about Sunny, and the reader becomes suspicious of just who Dr. Lucafont really is.



Chapter 11

Chapter 11 Summary

While everyone is panicking in the Reptile Room, Violet is desperately trying to find something to link Stephano to Uncle Monty's death and prove that he really is Count Olaf. She fashions a lock pick out of a plug on a lamp, which is very dangerous. Lemony Snicket points out that one should never, ever, attempt to do such a thing.

Violet walks down to the suitcases, which are still piled up in front of the house. Frantically, she begins to try her improvised lock-pick on Stephano's suitcase. Having no luck, she moistens the pick with her saliva, hoping that it will turn the lock. This fails, so Violet runs back to the house to get a bar of soap.

Once Violet returns, she notices for the first time that the people in the Reptile Room can see what she is doing. Her eyes meet Stephano's, and she rushes to open the suitcase before he can come outside. Just as the pick breaks and Violet thinks she has failed, the lock opens.

Inside Stephano's suitcase, Violet finds a variety of disgusting clothes, a glass vial with a sealed rubber cap, a syringe with a sharp needle, a laminated card, folded papers and a makeup compact. Grabbing her discoveries, Violet heads back to the Reptile Room.

Chapter 11 Analysis

Violet's inventing skills have paid off once again. She is able to fashion a lock-pick out of the most rudimentary materials and gets it to work. Her discovery of the items in Stephano's suitcase and her skill in discerning what they were used to accomplish will be revealed in the next chapter. Stephano catches sight of Violet, but he is unable to get away to stop her. Now that Mr. Poe has recovered from his hysteria, the children will need to convince him of the truth, a task that has not been easy in the past.



Chapter 12

Chapter 12 Summary

As Violet makes her way to the Reptile Room, readers rejoin Klaus, Sunny, Mr. Poe, Stephano and Dr. Lucafont. Klaus is trying to explain to Mr. Poe that Stephano had said he had no knowledge of snakes, while Stephano tries to explain his knowledge away. Mr. Poe is convinced that Stephano is lying, but Stephano is certain that there is no evidence to support the claim that he killed Uncle Monty. Violet arrives at this point in the conversation and informs him that he is incorrect.

Violet reveals the items she discovered in Stephano's briefcase. The glass vial contains the poison of the Mamba du Mal snake, and the syringe was used to deliver the deadly dose. Stephano also used the syringe to poke a second hole in his victim, to make it look like the snake had bitten Uncle Monty. Klaus points out that the Mamba du Mal snake strangles its victims, leaving them bruised, instead of pale, like Uncle Monty.

The folded papers are the tickets to Peru that Uncle Monty showed the children. Since Stephano's ticket was torn up, he stole Uncle Monty's ticket. The laminated card is Uncle Monty's Herpetological Society identification card, revealing that Stephano planned to pose as Uncle Monty to take the children to Peru.

Mr. Poe is still unconvinced that Stephano is really Count Olaf. Violet shows them the makeup compact she found, and Mr. Poe tries to find something to wipe Stephano's left ankle with. Stephano, of course, does not provide anything, and Dr. Lucafont wants to give up, since a cloth cannot be found. Mr. Poe reaches for his frequently used handkerchief, much to Stephano's dismay, since it is covered in germs. Mr. Poe rubs Stephano's ankle with the handkerchief, and slowly, the tattoo of an eye is revealed.

Chapter 12 Analysis

As the different items are revealed and explained, Stephano's protests grow. Violet and Klaus have worked well together to expose his plans, and he is quickly realizing that his time is up. Mr. Poe seems to be convinced that Stephano killed Uncle Monty after the children present their evidence, but he does not seem to believe that Stephano is truly Count Olaf. Once the famous tattoo is revealed, all of Count Olaf's plans are uncovered. Even though his disguise never took in the children, it is a relief that Mr. Poe finally sees the light. Again, the actions of Dr. Lucafont are curious, and his motivation will be revealed in the next chapter.



Chapter 13

Chapter 13 Summary

Now that Stephano has been revealed as Count Olaf, Mr. Poe informs him that he is under arrest. Mr. Poe apologizes to the children for not believing them initially. Klaus begins to wonder what happened to Uncle Monty's real assistant, Gustav, and Count Olaf reveals that he killed Gustav and forged the resignation note.

Dr. Lucafont offers to take Stephano to the police in his car, but Mr. Poe doesn't agree, since he still thinks the children want to see the inside of the doctor's car. Violet tells him that they couldn't care less about the car and agrees to let Dr. Lucafont take Count Olaf.

Violet and Klaus say good-bye to Count Olaf, but strangely, Sunny doesn't say anything. She is focused on the strangely solid hands of Dr. Lucafont and suddenly bites him. A loud crack is heard, and a hook is revealed. The true identity of Dr. Lucafont is finally uncovered. He is the hook-handed man, an accomplice of Count Olaf.

Count Olaf and the hook-handed man hop into the car and race off. The children try to convince Mr. Poe to follow them, but he will not allow it. He claims that he does not want to endanger the children and instead goes inside to call the police.

The exhausted children fall asleep on the stairs and awake to the sounds of a loud-voiced man giving orders. Bruce, from the herpetological society, has arrived to take all of Uncle Monty's reptiles away. The children are extremely upset, but there is nothing that they can do. They ask for the men to leave the Incredibly Deadly Viper, but Bruce refuses to let them have such a dangerous snake. The children try to explain that the name is a misnomer, but Bruce does not understand. The snakes and reptiles are loaded on Bruce's truck, and the children wave a tearful goodbye to the Incredibly Deadly Viper.

As the truck pulls away, Klaus tells Violet that she was brilliant in her efforts to unmask Count Olaf with her inventing skills. Violet tells Klaus that he was brilliant in his research of the Mamba du Mal. Sunny utters one of her first intelligible words, "Brilliant," and the siblings agree that Sunny was brilliant in distracting the adults. Even the Incredibly Deadly Viper was brilliant. The children watch the truck pull away, and they continue to watch long after it has gone.

Chapter 13 Analysis

Now that Count Olaf has been revealed, Mr. Poe bumbles once again in effectively detaining him. Aided by his accomplice, the hook-handed man, Count Olaf escapes, leaving the children to worry what his next move will be.

The children realize that as a team, they are much stronger than they would be singly, including their infant sister, Sunny. Each sibling had an important role to play, and without their teamwork, they would not have been able to unmask Count Olaf. The tearful goodbye to their friend brings the book to a close, as readers wait for the next set of unfortunate events to begin.



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 the 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 Violet 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.

Unlike many siblings, Violet and Klaus seem to get along very well. Due to their circumstances, they do not get into the type of fights that are common among siblings. Violet is very close with both her brother and younger sister and does her best to set a good example for them.

Violet's room at Uncle Monty's house is furnished with white paper on the walls to aid her inventing skills, which is a thoughtful gesture from her new guardian. Her skills are necessary to Uncle Monty, who has several reptile traps that need to be fixed for their upcoming expedition to Peru.

Violet's inventing talents come in handy several times throughout this book and throughout the remainder of the series. She is called upon to reveal Stephano's true identity and must create a lock-pick to find the important evidence to implicate Stephano in Uncle Monty's death.

Klaus Baudelaire

Klaus is the middle child of the three Baudelaire siblings. He is twelve years old, and he is 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' particular talents are well suited to their new guardian, Dr. Montgomery or Uncle Monty. Since Uncle Monty's assistant has mysteriously left, Klaus is called upon to research the indigenous snakes of Peru.

Klaus' 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. In *The Reptile Room*, Klaus is called upon to read through several books to find the solution that will implicate Stephano in the murder of Uncle Monty.



Klaus' talent for researching comes into play when the Baudelaires must figure out a way to get out of their predicament with Count Olaf. Klaus works together with his sisters, and their talents compliment one another, allowing them to save the day. 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 Sunny and keep her safe.

Sunny Baudelaire

Sunny is the youngest of the Baudelaire children, and she 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. Sunny's favorite pastime is biting things, and she prefers to find objects that are very hard. Uncle Monty supplies her with several sharp objects in her room to keep her occupied when she is not biting a long rope into workable pieces. 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.

Sunny makes a new friend in this story, the Incredibly Deadly Viper. He bites her in the beginning of the story, and she bites him back, forging a strong friendship. The two frequently play during the Baudelaires' week of happiness with Uncle Monty.

Sunny's 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. At the end of *The Reptile Room*, Sunny says, "Brilliant," in reference to the Baudelaires' work at revealing Count Olaf.

Dr. Montgomery/Uncle Monty

Uncle Monty's name is Montgomery Montgomery, and Mr. Poe advises the children to call him Dr. Montgomery at their first meeting. However, Uncle Monty's true generous spirit is revealed when the children first meet him and he asks them to call him Uncle Monty instead.

Uncle Monty is a very good guardian, one who truly seems to love the Baudelaire children. He fixes them a coconut pie for their first meeting, and he gives them each a separate room, furnished with exactly what the children like. Each night, he takes the Baudelaires to a movie and enjoys talking with them, but never talking down to them.

Uncle Monty also has a sense of humor, which is evidenced by his misnomer for the Incredibly Deadly Viper. He intended to play a trick on his colleagues with his newly discovered snake. Overall, Uncle Monty is a good natured, kind man, one whom the Baudelaires instantly feel will make their troubles disappear. Unfortunately, Uncle Monty is not in *The Reptile Room* for long. He is killed by Stephano/Count Olaf, and the children must get over their grief for their beloved guardian to bring justice to his killer.



Mr. Poe

Mr. Poe is a family friend of the Baudelaires 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 who 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 he seems to endanger the three children through his inaction. While he does not mean to cause them harm, invariably, his actions do just that.

Count Olaf/Stephano

Count Olaf is a tall, thin man, with shiny eyes and a unibrow. He is described as being predatory in nature, similar to a bird of prey. On his left ankle is the tattoo of an eye. In *The Reptile Room*, Count Olaf is disguised as Stephano, Uncle Monty's replacement assistant. He has shaved his eyebrows and his head, and he has apparently grown a very long beard. The tattoo, although first visible to the children, is disguised with makeup until the end of the book.

Count Olaf's true personality is further revealed in *The Reptile Room*. He will stop at nothing, even harming small children, to get his hands on the Baudelaire fortune. He threatens to use his knife on Klaus, Violet and Sunny several times throughout this book.

The Hook-Handed Man/Dr. Lucafont

The hook-handed man is a member of Count Olaf's theater troupe. His proper name is not given, just a description of him that states he has two hooks where his hands should be. The reason for his disfiguration is not revealed. He has a terrible disposition and scares the three children immensely.

In *The Reptile Room*, the hook-handed man disguises his hooks with fake wooden hands, which appear strangely solid, and pretends to be a doctor named Dr. Lucafont. He has a few moments when he almost gives himself away by calling Stephano "boss" and by forgetting what he is supposed to be doing. In the end, Sunny reveals the hook-handed man's true identity by biting one of the fake hands to reveal the hook.

Gustav

Gustav is referred to in passing in *The Reptile Room*. He was Uncle Monty's assistant, who resigned right before the Baudelaires arrived. In the last chapter, Count Olaf reveals that he murdered Gustav and forged the resignation note.



Bruce

Bruce is a colleague of Dr. Montgomery from the Herpetological Society. He is loud man, who is described as being quite chubby. He also seems quite dense. He does not understand the misnomer of the Incredibly Deadly Viper and does not have a large vocabulary, something the Baudelaires notice right away.

The Incredibly Deadly Viper

The Incredibly Deadly Viper is a very nice snake and quickly becomes friends with Sunny Baudelaire as well as Violet and Klaus. He is quite harmless and aids the children in creating a diversion while they attempt to reveal Stephano's identity. As he is taken away at the end of the book, he cries over his separation from the Baudelaires.



Objects/Places

Tedia

Tedia is a small town outside of the Baudelaires' home city. Dr. Montgomery's house is located just outside of Tedia, along Lousy Lane.

Lousy Lane

Lousy Lane is a road that travels alongside the Grim River, outside of Tedia. The Baudelaires take this road to arrive at Dr. Montgomery's house. The road stinks, due to a nearby horseradish factory. The view along Lousy Lane is dismal, showing nothing but gray fields and the depressing Grim River.

Grim River

The Grim River is nine-tenths mud and is home to very disturbing fish. The river runs alongside Lousy Lane.

Dr. Montgomery's House

Dr. Montgomery's house is located at the end of Lousy Lane. It is a large dwelling, framed by snake-shaped hedges.

The Reptile Room

The Reptile Room is a room in Dr. Montgomery's house where he keeps all of his live reptile and snake specimens. It is lined with cages on both sides and at the end. There is also a large library full of herpetological books and comfortable chairs. The exterior walls of this room are glass, offering a view of the snake-shaped hedges in the lawn.

Peru

Dr. Montgomery is planning an expedition to Peru, and invites the children to join him. After Dr. Montgomery's death, Count Olaf tries to kidnap the children to this country in South America, where he will be able to steal their fortune.

The Prospero

Dr. Montgomery has purchased tickets on the ship The Prospero for their upcoming expedition to Peru.

Hazy Harbor

Hazy Harbor is located just outside of Tedia. This is where The Prospero is docked.



Themes

Teamwork

As in the first story in *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *The Bad Beginning*, the Baudelaire children realize the importance of working together to solve their problems. Each child has a particular talent that comes into use several times in this story.

At first, Dr. Montgomery needs the children's individual talents to prepare for their expedition to Peru. Violet, who is gifted mechanically, will need to repair the snake traps so that the snakes they find will be comfortable during their journey. Klaus is needed to research the indigenous snakes of Peru, making use of his reading skills. Sunny's talent for biting things is used to cut one long rope into several smaller pieces.

After the death of Dr. Montgomery, the Baudelaire children are called on again to use their particular talents. Violet must invent a lock-pick to find the evidence that will link Stephano to Dr. Montgomery's death and prove that he is really Count Olaf. Klaus' researching skills are needed to find out more about the type of snake that is believed to have bitten Dr. Montgomery. Last but not least, Sunny's talent is required to prove that Dr. Lucafont is one of Count Olaf's associates in disguise.

As a whole, the children are much stronger than they would be on their own. For example, Violet's discovery of the vial of poison and syringe would not have had the same effect if Klaus had not figured out that the Mamba du Mal strangles its victims before they are bitten. If Sunny had not bitten Dr. Lucafont's hand to expose the hook beneath, Mr. Poe and the Baudelaire children would not have known that he was Count Olaf's associate.

Malevolence

The depths of Count Olaf's wickedness are revealed in *The Reptile Room*. Readers had a small taste of Olaf's evil nature in *The Bad Beginning*, but in this story, the narrator goes to great lengths in describing Olaf's dastardly character.

First, Count Olaf begins by threatening to cut off one of Sunny Baudelaire's toes. Since Sunny is an almost helpless infant, minus her four sharp teeth, this is quite appalling. Next, Count Olaf keeps Violet from talking to Uncle Monty by brandishing his knife and indicating that he will harm Klaus. At dinner, Count Olaf continues his reign of terror by brushing Violet's leg with his knife.

The threats with the knife continue as Count Olaf situates himself between the bedrooms of the Baudelaire children and Uncle Monty, to prevent them from speaking to him during the night. When the children do finally get to talk to Uncle Monty alone, a heavy lamp is dropped from above, nearly landing on Uncle Monty's head.



The true depths of Count Olaf's malevolence are plumbed when he murders Uncle Monty in the Reptile Room and tries to kidnap the Baudelaire children. Although he is unable to carry out his entire plan, readers are allowed a glimpse of his capabilities, when he threatens to kill the children in Peru and steal their fortune.

The motivation behind Count Olaf's malevolence is money. His greed for the Baudelaire fortune is so great that he will stop at nothing, not even threatening infants, in order to get his hands on it. Olaf's claim that his evildoing is nothing more than a game, after his true identity is discovered, offers more insight into his true nature. He does not seem to feel that there are any true consequences to his actions, since everything is a simple game to be played out.

Deception

The theme of deception begins with the disguise that Count Olaf dons to fool Uncle Monty. He goes to the lengths of shaving his head and his eyebrow, as well as adding a beard to hide his appearance. Unfortunately, Uncle Monty is taken in by this deception, but not completely. Uncle Monty is deceived into thinking that Stephano is a spy, sent from the Herpetological Society to ruin his discoveries. This deception costs him his life and endangers the lives of the Baudelaire children.

The deception continues when Mr. Poe arrives. He is also taken in by Count Olaf's disguise, and the children are unable, at first, to convince him of the truth. It is not until Count Olaf's tattoo, which was hidden by makeup, is revealed that Mr. Poe believes what the children are saying.

The death of Uncle Monty is shrouded in deception as well. He bears fang marks, but the snake that is accused of killing him strangles its victims first. Violet finally uncovers this deception when she finds the vial containing the poison of the Mamba du Mal and the syringe that was used to inject Uncle Monty with the deadly venom.

The last deception concerns Dr. Lucafont. There is something strange about him from the beginning. He has strangely solid hands and his odd mannerisms. He slips up a few times, but no one seems to notice except Sunny Baudelaire.



Style

Point of View

The Reptile Room is told by a third-person omniscient narrator, who inserts his own commentary into the book. As in the first book, *The Bad Beginning*, the narrator often uses asides to the reader, encouraging readers to stop reading throughout the book.

Through the use of asides, the narrator reveals that the book contains dramatic irony, a plot device that lets the reader know what is about to happen. The characters in the book are oblivious to the imminent death of Uncle Monty, but the reader is made aware, well in advance, and left to wonder when and how it will happen. When Sunny is bitten by the Incredibly Deadly Viper, the chapter ends suddenly, leaving the reader to think that Sunny might actually be dead. However, the narrator quickly reveals that a character will die but that it is not Sunny. The premise is discussed openly in the chapter and can be used as a teaching device to learn more about the use of dramatic irony in a story.

As a plot device, the narrator's involvement in the story is an interesting direction for the author to take. Normally, the reader is left in suspense as a story progresses, not knowing what will happen next. By revealing the death of a character early on, the readers are hooked into finding out how the character will meet his doom. The dramatic irony is not allowed to drag on. Within a short while, the discussed crime occurs, leaving the reader to pull for the Baudelaires to figure out how it was performed. Although a major plot point is revealed, the suspense builds because the main characters in the story are unaware of what the reader knows.

Dramatic irony leaves readers in an omniscient position, where they are allowed more knowledge than the characters within the story. This heightens the suspense, since although the readers know something terrible is going to happen, they cannot affect the action. The reader must wait to see how the horrible event will take place and how the characters will react to it. Instead of leading to a lack of reader interest, dramatic irony encourages the reader to keep reading, despite the narrator's frequent pleadings to stop.

Setting

The setting for *The Reptile Room* is mainly the house of Dr. Montgomery. This house is located near Tedia, a fictional town. The proximity to the Baudelaires' first residence leads the reader to believe that Tedia is in fact the former home of the Baudelaires.

The road to Dr. Montgomery's house is called Lousy Lane and features a dull view of gray fields and a depressing waterway known as the Grim River. The overpowering stench of horseradish is ever present, even outside the Montgomery residence, thanks to a nearby horseradish plant.



Inside Dr. Montgomery's house is the Reptile Room, which the book is titled after. The room is completely enclosed in glass and is home to all of Dr. Montgomery's reptilian specimens. At first, it is a scary place for the children, but they soon learn what to do and what not to do, to avoid coming to harm.

The Reptile Room is the location where dramatic irony is introduced. Dr. Montgomery assures the children that no harm will come to them in the Reptile Room. The author, however, lets the reader know that great harm will come to Dr. Montgomery is this location, and very soon.

Language and Meaning

As in the preceding volume, the language used in this book may be difficult for some children. There is a smattering of some rarely used words, such as "Brummagem," which means fake, but usually applies to a thing and not an emotion, and "Vainglorious," which is used to describe someone that has a high opinion of themselves, usually undeservedly.

In addition to rare words, some difficult words are introduced. However, the author always provides the definition for these words and gives examples of them in context throughout the book. This leads the reader to a greater appreciation of words in general and will hopefully encourage children to broaden their vocabularies.

The language that Sunny is currently speaking in *The Reptile Room* cannot be called "baby talk" but consists of actual words, usually containing the same meaning of the term that Sunny is trying to convey. Sunny's vocabulary is improving along with the reader's, and by the end of the book, she uses her first big word, "brilliant."

Structure

The book is divided into thirteen chapters, much like the first installment of *A Series of Unfortunate Events*, *The Bad Beginning*. 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 directly with the reader. Readers are given the feeling of being in the same position as Lemony Snicket, as he tells the tale from the perspective of an all-knowing narrator. Since he knows the ending of the story, readers are allowed glimpses into what will happen ahead of time. The author also reveals personal information, such as the dinner party that forces him to leave the fate of Sunny Baudelaire up in the air at the end of Chapter Two.

As in the first book, the end of the story leaves the fate of the Baudelaire children up in the air. The chapters are kept brief and often also end up in the air, to generate suspense and appeal to the young age group that is most likely to read these stories. Chapters would work well read aloud, as each one stands on its own and frequently ends with a cliffhanger.

Quotes

"You should call him Dr. Montgomery,' Mr. Poe replied, 'unless he asks you to call him Montgomery. Both his first and last names are Montgomery, so it doesn't really make much difference.'" Chapter 1, page 6.

"Bambini" is an Italian word for children,' Uncle Monty explained. 'I had a sudden urge to speak a little Italian.'" Chapter 2, page 18.

"There is a pair of snakes who have learned to drive a car so recklessly that they would run you over in the street and never stop to apologize." Chapter 3, page 31.

"He taught them not to give the Green Gimlet toad too much water, and to never, under any circumstances, let the Virginian Wolfsnake near a typewriter." Chapter 3, page 35.

"If anyone deserved to travel along Lousy Lane,' Violet said, glaring at him, 'it is you, Count Olaf.'" Chapter 4, page 45.

"Violet, Klaus and Sunny all knew that if he figured out a way to seize the Baudelaire fortune, he would slit the throats of the Baudelaire orphans as easily as you or I might eat a small butter cookie." Chapter 4, page 51.

"But if somebody is surpassingly wrong - say, when a waiter bites your nose instead of taking your order - you can often be so surprised you are unable to say anything at all." Chapter 5, page 73.

"I see your point,' Mr. Poe said. 'But, I don't think Sunny will be willing to sit on Dr. Montgomery's lap, if he's dead. We'll have to work out another way.'" Chapter 9, page 129.

"But although it was disgusting, hardened phlegm was not the sort of evidence Violet was hoping for." Chapter 9, page 131.

"How did you do that,' Mr. Poe asked. 'Nice girls shouldn't know how to do such things.'" Chapter 12, page 168.

"Your left ankle, please,' he said sternly. 'But you've been coughing in that all day,' Stephano said. 'It has germs!'" Chapter 12, page 173.

"But that's nothing compared to what I will do to you, orphans. You have won this round of the game, but I will return for your fortune, and for your precious skin." Chapter 13, page 177.



Topics for Discussion

The name that Dr. Montgomery selects for his discovery, the Incredibly Deadly Viper, is a misnomer, or a name has an opposite or very different meaning from the actual characteristics of the thing it names. For example, Greenland is a very barren and icy place, while Iceland is very green. Name two other examples of misnomers.

What causes Klaus to regret not calling the taxi driver back when Stephano arrived? Do you think that if he had done this differently, the story would have had a different outcome?

Uncle Monty is a very different person from Count Olaf. Can you describe what makes him a better guardian than the adults the Baudelaires have previously encountered?

When Uncle Monty dies, Violet tries to remember the last words that the Baudelaires spoke to their guardian. She regrets not saying more to him before they went to bed the previous night. What can you learn from Violet's regret?

The death of Uncle Monty affects the Baudelaires in several different ways. Describe how each child reacts to the death of their guardian.

Why do the adults fail to recognize that Stephano is really Count Olaf in disguise, when the children have no problem at all recognizing him instantly?

When Stephano crashes Dr. Montgomery's jeep into Mr. Poe's car, he begins calling him different names, such as Mr. Toe or Mr. Foe. Why do you think he makes these mistakes?

Dr. Lucafont has a suspicious air from the moment he arrives in the story. List the different actions or characteristics that cast this suspicion on his character.