



The Austere Academy (A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book 5)

By Lemony Snicket



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As the three Baudelaire orphans warily approach their new home Prufrock Preparatory School, they can't help but notice the enormous stone arch bearing the school's motto Memento Mori or "Remember you will die." This is not a cheerful greeting and certainly marks an inauspicious beginning to a very bleak story just as we have come to expect from Lemony Snicket's A Series of Unfortunate Events, the deliciously morbid set of books that began with *The Bad Beginning* and only got worse.



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The Austere Academy (A Series of Unfortunate Events, Book 5) By Lemony Snicket Bibliography

- Sales Rank: #5982 in Books
- Brand: Harper Collins
- Published on: 2000-08-08
- Released on: 2000-08-08
- Ingredients: Example Ingredients
- Format: Deckle Edge
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 7.00" h x .92" w x 5.00" l, .82 pounds
- Binding: Hardcover
- 240 pages

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Editorial Review

Amazon.com Review

As the three Baudelaire orphans warily approach their new home--Prufrock Preparatory School--they can't help but notice the enormous stone arch bearing the school's motto *Memento Mori*, or "Remember you will die." This is not a cheerful greeting, and certainly marks an inauspicious beginning to a very bleak story. Of course, this is what we have come to expect from Lemony Snicket's Series of Unfortunate Events, the deliciously morbid set of books that began with *The Bad Beginning* and only got worse.

In *The Austere Academy*, Violet, Klaus, and Sunny are at first optimistic--attending school is a welcome change for the book-loving trio, and the academy is allegedly safe from the dreaded Count Olaf, who is after their fortune. Hope dissipates quickly, however, when they meet Vice Principal Nero, a self-professed genius violinist who sneeringly imitates their every word. More dreadful still, he houses them in the tin Orphans Shack, crawling with toe-biting crabs and dripping with a mysterious tan fungus. A beam of light shines through the despair when the Baudelaire orphans meet the Quagmires, two of three orphaned triplets who are no strangers to disaster and sympathize with their predicament. When Count Olaf appears on the scene disguised as Coach Genghis (covering his monobrow with a turban and his ankle tattoo with expensive running shoes), the Quagmires resolve to come to the aid of their new friends. Sadly, this proves to be a hideous mistake.

Snicket disarms us again with his playful juxtapositions--only he can compare bombs with strawberry shortcake (both are as dangerous to make as assumptions), muse on how babies adjust developmentally to the idea of curtains, or ponder why the Baudelaire orphans would not want to be stalks of celery despite their incessant bad luck as humans. We can't get enough of this splendid series of misadventures, and can only wager that swarms of young readers will be right next to us in line for the next installment. (Ages 9 and older) --Karin Snelson

From School Library Journal

Grade 4-7-In this fifth entry in the saga of the three Baudelaire children, the siblings are sent to a boarding school where they are tormented because they are orphans. There is the usual array of stupid/evil adults including the ridiculous Vice Principal Nero, who mimics everything that Klaus and Violet say and employs baby Sunny as his secretary because she is too young to attend class. Brown-nosing brats like Carmelita Spats make the children's lives even more miserable. The ending is a cliff-hanger as the evil Count Olaf, disguised as Coach Genghis, the new gym teacher, drives off with the orphans' only friends. In these days of Harry Potter, this book is a pesky nuisance, with little plot to drive it, situations that fall short of being interesting or off-the-wall, and cardboard characters. The author strains to be eccentric and his constant interruptions in the narrative to define a word or phrase are jarring at best.

Ann Cook, Winter Park Public Library, FL

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From [Booklist](#)

Gr. 4-6. The Beaudelaire orphans enroll as students at Prufrock Academy in the fifth Series of Unfortunate Events book. The Academy, run by nasty, mimicking Vice Principal Nero, is shaped like a large tombstone, and the perpetually unlucky Violet, Klaus, and Sunny must stay in a tin shack with biting crabs, dripping tan fungus, and green walls decorated with tiny green hearts. Series followers will be keeping their eye out for evil Count Olaf in one of his disguises, and the author doesn't disappoint. Snicket once again uses comical

word definitions in the text ("the phrase 'impressionable age' here means 'ten and eight years old, respectively'), and just when things seem a little too predictable, Count Olaf makes off with the Beaudelaire's new friends, the Quagmire orphans, so setting things up for book six. Kids not familiar with the previous books will also enjoy this. REVWR

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Users Review

From reader reviews:

Colby McCray:

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Jeff Farley:

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Jason Caldwell:

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