

THE BOOKSHELF:

A solitaire game about reliving stories, recognizing the past, & rewriting the future.

Needed: A notebook and pen, a bookshelf or stack of books in any state.

Sit down in front of your bookshelf.

Is it organized?

Let's start there. You can choose how you do it. Think about what you want. Do you want authors? Titles? Genres? Maybe you want to organize by dustjacket. There's no wrong answer here. If it's already organized, look around and see if there's anything out of place, or if you have new books. Maybe there's a shelf that's a little untidy.

Take a few minutes to clean it up, reorganize, dust, or rearrange the knick knacks on the shelf. As you do this, consider the books you have, the ones that were gifts or that you bought for yourself. Every book has a story inside and outside. Remember that you know the stories of even unread books, because they are yours, and you have kept them.

After you are satisfied that your bookshelf is how you like it, once it makes you happy, you're ready to begin.

Pick the book that you used to start the categorization. Is it Atwood? Is it a white cover?

Open it.

Read through the first few pages, pick out a sentence, phrase, or string of words that speaks to you now. What turn of phrase catches you? What idea do you love. What declaration in these first crucial phrases made the entire book worth reading.

Write it down.

Put the book back, and open the second book.

Repeat the process, taking time to read the first few pages, and writing down another phrase.

You may try to create a narrative story, and I encourage you to create a narrative, however surreal. If you can't, or don't want to, you are instead writing a poem. Enjoy the words taken from things you love. Remake what you have read, create a new story, with a new hero, and a new author.

If you have chotchies on your shelf, when you arrive at one, take it down and add it to your story. What powers does it have? Who gave it to you? Where does it rest on the shelf, and is

that important? Is it a main character or a beloved best friend?

If you have a magazine or newspaper on the shelf, instead of reading the first few pages, flip through it. Ask yourself why you're keeping it. Write that into your story.

Next, if you realize that you are ready to let it go, tear out an image, headline, advertisement, or other quippy moment, and add it to your story. Realize that there is no loss here, as you keep your serial publications in your own story.

If you do not want to part with your publication, put it back on the shelf and move on to the next item.

If you have a photo on your shelf, make sure to write it into the story as well. Is it a setting, a memory, a person, a trip? What makes that photo special, why do you keep it, what is it there to do? Give your work a similar purpose. Remind yourself of what is beloved and frozen now takes on new life as you rewrite it. It is no longer static, but vibrant and exciting again.

When you come to a bookstop or start on a new shelf, you can start a new narrative, a new chapter, or switch perspectives. Maybe there are two sides to the story, maybe this is a story that has happened before, or again, or after. What does this story look like to an outsider? What will it look like in three years, in five, in ten? Who will read it?

It is recommended that you stop at the end of the shelf, but it is not necessary. Stop whenever you are done, or whenever you think your story is enough. There is no single story to tell, there is nothing judged or lost, only the knowledge that your stories are treasured and important, that your words and collection is beloved.

If you feel comfortable, consider sharing your story with a friend. Pass along The Bookshelf, and tell them that if they have an hour or so, maybe they want to add to the story.

This game was made for the #CozyGameJam by Linda H. Codega.
Find her on twitter @_linfinn. Find her on itch.io/lhcodega