



# The Shelf: From LEQ to LES: Adventures in Extreme Reading

*Phyllis Rose*

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# The Shelf: From LEQ to LES: Adventures in Extreme Reading

Phyllis Rose

**The Shelf: From LEQ to LES: Adventures in Extreme Reading** Phyllis Rose

**Phyllis Rose embarks on a grand literary experiment—to read her way through a random shelf of library books, LEQ–LES**

Can you have an Extreme Adventure in a library? Phyllis Rose casts herself into the wilds of an Upper East Side lending library in an effort to do just that. Hoping to explore the "real ground of literature," she reads her way through a somewhat randomly chosen shelf of fiction, from LEQ to LES.

The shelf has everything Rose could wish for—a classic she has not read, a remarkable variety of authors, and a range of literary styles. The early nineteenth-century Russian classic *A Hero of Our Time* by Mikhail Lermontov is spine by spine with *The Phantom of the Opera* by Gaston Leroux. Stories of French Canadian farmers sit beside those about aristocratic Austrians. California detective novels abut a picaresque novel from the seventeenth century. There are several novels by a wonderful, funny, contemporary novelist who has turned to raising dogs because of the tepid response to her work.

In *The Shelf*, Rose investigates the books on her shelf with exuberance, candor, and wit while pondering the many questions her experiment raises and measuring her discoveries against her own inner shelf—those texts that accompany us through life. "Fairly sure that no one in the history of the world has read exactly this series of novels," she sustains a sense of excitement as she creates a refreshingly original and generous portrait of the literary enterprise.

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