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Home School pre-visit materials for the Alexander Ramsey House, Minnesota Historical Society

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Dear Teacher,

The staff of the Alexander Ramsey House welcomes you and your students! We hope you find our new classroom materials helpful and interesting. Your students’ experiences at the Ramsey House will be more meaningful if they are prepared for their visit, and if they have the opportunity to reflect afterwards. With this in mind, we have created activities to extend learning in many subject areas, focusing on varied learning styles.

Our Educational Tours provide a more age-appropriate experience and engage multiple senses. We hope you and your students will enjoy the tours and ask that you take a few moments after you have toured the house to fill out a short survey. We will use the information you provide to further tailor our tours and classroom materials to fulfill your needs and preferences.

Please spend some time with your students and chaperones discussing museum behavior. Rules of etiquette were important to Victorian people, and we have some of our own. To preserve the house and its artifacts, please do not bring gum or candy, food or drink. Cameras and cell phones may only be used outside of the house. And of course, please refrain from touching unless otherwise instructed.

We want to encourage your students to ask questions and share their own ideas. We recommend reminding chaperones that our Educational Tours are tailored to the children, with the goal of involving them as much as possible.

If you have questions or requests not addressed in this packet, please contact us. We look forward to seeing you at the Alexander Ramsey House!

Sincerely,

The Alexander Ramsey House Staff
1. Which educational materials did you use with your students?

2. Were the materials helpful in preparing your students for their experience at the Ramsey House?

3. Are there other types of materials you would have liked?

4. What would have made you more likely to use the educational materials?

5. What did you feel was the most valuable part of the tour?

6. What part of the tour do you feel could be improved?

7. Do you have any other feedback for us?

Thank you so much! Please return this survey in the envelope provided. We hope to see you next year!
Alexander Ramsey was born in 1815 in Pennsylvania. Alexander married Anna Jenks in 1845. Four years later Alex, Anna, and their three year old son traveled by steamboat, stagecoach, and canoe to the new Minnesota Territory where Mr. Ramsey was to be the first governor. Mr. Ramsey's job was to buy land from the Dakota and Ojibwe Indians so that settlers could move to Minnesota. In 1860, Mr. Ramsey became the second governor of the state of Minnesota and held that position during the Civil and Dakota Wars. He showed his pride in Minnesota as the first President of the Minnesota Historical Society and as a U.S. Senator. He loved his family very much and lived with his daughter and grandchildren in what he called his "Mansion House" until he died in 1903.

Anna Jenks Ramsey was born in Pennsylvania in 1826. She was different from many girls at the time because she learned to read, write, and do math. When her husband told her in 1849 that they were moving to Minnesota, Mrs. Ramsey did not know what to expect. The first years in Minnesota were difficult. Two of their young children died, and Mrs. Ramsey told her husband she would "never want to winter again in St. P." She later came to love Minnesota as much as her husband did and was active in planning and building the present Ramsey House. Mrs. Ramsey bought all the furnishings in New York for the "Mansion House." Mrs. Ramsey traveled to Europe and to the American West before she died at 58 years of age.

Marion Ramsey Furness was the third child born to Alex and Anna and the only child to live to be an adult. When she was nineteen, her family moved into the present Ramsey House, and on her twenty-second birthday, she married Charles Furness in her home. Marion and Charlie had four children, but their second son died as a baby. Then Charlie became sick with a mental illness and had to live in an institution the rest of his life. Marion moved back to St. Paul and raised their three children in her parents' home. She was very active in St. Paul's social life and loved music. She lived in the Ramsey House until her death in 1935.

Anita, Ramsey, and Laura Furness were Marion and Charlie's children. Anita was born in 1876, and when she was six years old, her mother described her as "aggravating + then fascinating as usual." Ramsey, a year younger than Anita, was described by his grandfather as "a daredevil sort of fellow." Laura, born in 1882, described herself at thirteen as a "great sport" who rode a bicycle every night. When Ramsey grew up he moved to Missouri, but his sisters lived together in the Ramsey House until they died in 1956 and 1964. They chose to give their house to Minnesota Historical Society so we can learn about their family today.
Alexander Ramsey's Family Tree

Objective: To gain familiarity with the Ramsey family, to use a family tree.

Use this family tree to answer the questions on the next page.

You might want to work with a partner!

- Thomas Ramsey
  1784-1826
- Elizabeth Kelker
  1791-1853
- Michael Hutchinson Jenks
  1795-1867
- Mary Ridgeway Earl
  1798-1867

- Alexander Ramsey
  1815-1903
- Anna Earl Jenks
  1826-1884
- Hannah Earl Jenks Crouch
  1825-1902

- Alexander "Sonny" Ramsey
  1846-1850
- William Henry Ramsey
  1850-1851
- Marion Ramsey
  1853-1935
  & Charles Eliot Furness
  1844-1909

- Anna Ramsey Earl "Anita" Furness
  1876-1964
- Alexander Ramsey "Ramsey" Furness
  1877-1916
- Charles Eliot Furness, Jr.
  1879-1880
- Laura Furness
  1882-1959
The Ramsey Family Tree

1. How many people in the Ramsey family were named Alexander?______________________________

2. When Alexander, Anna, and Marion Ramsey moved into the mansion, Marion was 19 years old. What year was that?________________________________________________________

3. Anita's full name was Anna Ramsey Earl Furness. Name all the people she could have been named for and their relationships to her.________________________________________________________

4. Often "Aunt Hannah" took care of Anita, Ramsey, and Laura. Whose aunt was she?_______________

5. How old was Anita when Laura was born?__________________________________________________

6. How old was the Ramsey House when Anita died?____________________________________________

7. What would Laura call Thomas Ramsey?____________________________________________________
On August 18, 1880, Henry Hastings Sibley wrote a letter to his old friend, Alexander Ramsey. Henry regretfully informed Alex that neither he nor Anna Ramsey would be going on the cross-country trip with Alex, President Hayes, and Mrs. Hayes. He also had some words of warning:

“I can only wish you all a happy experience and safe return, albeit I fear that you have formed too extensive and laborious a plan for a man of your age however vigorous, and Mrs. R. shares my apprehension. Five days staging over the Oregon Mountains at the rate of sixty miles a day, to say nothing of the same mode of conveyance over hundreds of miles of the wilds of Arizona and New Mexico, would have been but sport for us a quarter of a century ago, whereas now it will severely tax your energies to perform the trip.”

1. Circle all the numbers Sibley wrote in his letter.

2. How many miles would Ramsey cover “staging over the Oregon Mountains” all together?

3. How long would that trip take someone in a car on a highway today?

4. What year was it “a quarter of a century ago”? How old would Alexander Ramsey have been?
Apparently Alexander Ramsey was quite “vigorous” because he made the trip!

Later in his letter Sibley addressed the issue of population.

“When, in reply to your question, I placed the population of Minnesota at 800,000, you deemed me too sanguine, but the census shows 780,000 nevertheless. Minneapolis by a system of padding well understood, claims a larger number than St. Paul, but I do not believe there is a difference of a thousand in the two cities.”

1. What did the governors mean by "too sanguine"?

2. How much bigger is the population of Minnesota now than in 1880?

3. How much bigger is Minneapolis than St. Paul now?
OFFICE OF THE

Saint Paul Gas Light Company,

NO. 92 EAST THIRD STREET,

Letter from Saint Paul, August 18th, 1880

Hon. Alex Ramsey,
Washington A. C.

My dear Sir,

I called to see Mrs. Ramsey

two days since, and was received by her decidedly

improved. She showed me the programme laid out for the
Presidential party in Sept. 1st, and we were both very

reluctantly compelled to arrive at the conclusion, that it

would not do for either of us to attempt to undergo the

fatigue of too continuous a trip. Mr. Stewart, at once put

a veto on Mrs. Ramsey’s proceeding to join the party, and

my own health is too precarious to justify me in accepting

your kind invitation. I very much regret that such is my

situation, for I had promised myself much enjoyment in

the company of Mrs. Ramsey and yourself, and in renewing

my remarkable acquaintance with President A. P. Hayes.

Nevertheless, I can only wish you all a happy experience

and safe return, albeit I fear that you have formed

too extensive and laborious a plan for a man of

your age and former vigor, and Mrs. A. Hence my
Saint Paul, 1888

Approach the Oregon Mountains at the rate of fifty miles a day, to say nothing of the same mode of conveyance over hundreds of miles of the wilds of Arizona and New Mexico, would have been but short for us a quarter of a century ago, where now it will certainly free your energies to perform the task.

We have nothing new to report. I have been communicating with some friends at White Bear Lake for a five-day past, and come in to my office occasionally to clean my desk. St. Paul continues to grow in space, the improvements in streets and other buildings being beyond all anticipations. When in reply to your question I placed the population of Minneapolis at 800,000, you deemed me too sanguine, but the census shows 700,000. Nevertheless, Minneapolis by a system of grading and development claims a larger number than St. Paul, but I do not believe there is a difference of a thousand in the two cities.

With warm regards to all friends, Col. Ben included,

Yours sincerely,

A. H. Abbey
Alexander Ramsey and Westward Expansion

Background Information

Alexander Ramsey arrived in Minnesota on May 27, 1849. As first Governor of the new Territory of Minnesota, Ramsey was entrusted with acquiring land for new settlers from Europe and the eastern states. At that time, Minnesota Territory stretched to the Missouri River, including parts of present-day North and South Dakota. The vast majority of this land was owned by the Dakota and Ojibwe people. Asking the legislature to purchase land from the Dakota, Ramsey said, "I feel a conviction that this country, once thrown open for settlement, would be peopled with a rapidity exceeding anything in the history of western colonization."

Ramsey enlisted the aid of fur traders such as Henry Sibley to help negotiate the treaties. Many Dakota were in debt to these traders, so Ramsey hoped the involvement of the traders would influence the Dakota to agree to the treaties. Ramsey met with the northern two groups of Dakota in June 1851 at Traverse des Sioux. With heavy pressure by the traders and others, the Sisseton and Wahpeton bands agreed to sell their land for cash, goods, and a reservation on the Minnesota River. After signing two copies of the treaties, the leaders were led to a third set of papers, which they signed. Many assumed it was another copy of the treaty, but by signing these Traders Papers, the leaders agreed to pay $275,000 to the fur traders for past debt. Within days the leaders attempted to disallow the Traders Papers, but ultimately they were enforced and the fur traders received payment directly from the government.

After the trouble at Traverse des Sioux, Ramsey found negotiating with the southern bands of Dakota more difficult. Meeting with the Mdewakanton and Wahpekute Dakota bands at Mendota, Ramsey pressured the Dakota leaders into agreeing to similar terms to sell their land. The influence of Henry Sibley and his trading partners was vital to getting the Dakota to agree to the treaty, but it was not enough. Ramsey used soldiers from Ft. Snelling to intimidate the Dakota, withheld food and supplies from them and even paid several Dakota leaders in gold in order to get enough signatures. In the end the Dakota agreed to sell the land in exchange for goods, annuities and a reservation. The United States purchased 25 million acres of land for roughly 10 cents an acre.

In 1851-1852 missionaries and other friends of the Dakota lobbied Congress to investigate Ramsey for his actions in negotiating the two treaties. The Senate Committee on Indian Affairs investigated Ramsey but found nothing wrong, declaring "that the conduct of Governor Ramsey was not only free from blame, but highly commendable and meritorious." Although unsatisfactory to the Dakota and Ramsey opponents, the treaties were ratified and the Dakota were forced to live up to the agreement.

As part of the treaty, the Dakota reserved land along both banks of the Minnesota River for themselves. The Dakota began moving to this strip of land in 1852. By 1858, the US Congress forced the Dakota to give up the land on the northern bank of the river to make room for more settlers. In 1861-1862 the Dakota were struggling to survive. Their traditional hunting land
was now being filled with farmers. They were unable to grow enough food on their 10-mile wide strip of land and a drought had destroyed crops the previous year. They relied on the annual payment of gold and goods promised to them in the 1851 treaties, but the payment in 1862 was delayed. By August 1862 hunger, resentment and anger boiled over into armed conflict.

Dakota soldiers first attacked the Lower Sioux Reservation and then spread out, attacking farms, the town of New Ulm, and Ft. Ridgely. Many Dakota did not participate in the attacks and attempted to warn and save settlers from the growing conflict. Governor Alexander Ramsey, speaking for many Americans who were horrified by the attacks, said "The Sioux Indians must be exterminated or driven forever beyond the borders of the state." He called upon Henry Sibley to lead troops against the Dakota soldiers and within five weeks, Sibley had defeated them.

Over 1,700 Dakota, both those who attacked the settlers and those who tried to save them, were in Sibley's custody. Sibley, responding to cries for quick justice on the Dakota, held trials and sentenced over 300 Dakota to death. President Abraham Lincoln reviewed the cases and reduced many of the sentences to time in prison. On December 26, 1862, 38 Dakota were hanged in Mankato in the largest government-sanctioned mass execution in American history. Most of the remaining Dakota spent the winter in a camp near Fort Snelling where scores died from disease and the harsh conditions. In the spring the remaining Dakota were sent to reservations in South Dakota. Although many Dakota eventually returned to Minnesota, this was the final act of the US-Dakota War of 1862.
Alexander Ramsey and Westward Expansion

Activity Ideas

~ Discussion Questions

(use as a whole group, in small groups, or individually through journaling)

- How do you think Ramsey handled his charge of purchasing land? What would you have done differently?

- Similar processes occurred across the country. Can you think of a plan to develop land that would have been fairer to the Indians?

- Did this article change the way you think about Alexander Ramsey or about Minnesota? In what ways?

- Do you think a government investigation of Governor Ramsey would have had the same outcome today? Why or why not?

~ In small groups research one of the people or groups in the article:

- Ramsey
- Wabashas
- The Legislature
- Fur traders
- President Lincoln
- Senate Committee
- Taopi
- Little Crow
- on Indian Affairs

- Write about and evaluate your group's role. How could it have been different, how was it justified?

- Pretending to be these individuals, conduct a class meeting. Choose a facilitator, and debate the issues in role. Try to come to a peaceful consensus.

~ Make a timeline incorporating dates from the article. Add other events you know about Ramsey's life and events from American and world history of the time. Write about the connections you see between Ramsey's career and the rest of the world during the mid to late 19th century.

~ Write a letter to one of the people or groups involved. Express your opinions about the way they handled themselves, with suggestions for what they could have done differently and why.
Victorian Houses

Name: ______________________

Objectives: To understand that home architecture is influenced by individual families and by society. To see and create a house plan from bird's eye perspective.

Background Information

Alexander and Anna Ramsey planned their house carefully. They planned to have many parties, so they made a room for that. They planned to have servants, so they separated the kitchen from the rest of their house. What would you think about if you were planning your own “Mansion House”?

Activity

Look at the blueprint for the Ramseys' first floor.

1. In red, circle the names of the rooms for servants.
2. In green, underline the rooms for guests.
3. In blue, put a dot in rooms you would want in your house.
4. In yellow, put a star in rooms you would not want.

Which room does a guest enter in the Ramsey House? ________________________________

Which room would you want your guests to enter? ________________________________

Which room would you spend the most time in? ________________________________

Would you want that room in the front or the back of the house? Why? ________________________________

What special rooms are the Ramseys missing that you would want in your house?

Where would you put your special rooms? Why? ________________________________

On the back of the Ramseys' blueprint, draw the first floor of your Mansion House. Do not forget to include doors and hallways!
Objective: To experience nineteenth century school work and literature. To think critically about social lessons and values.

Choose one or more activities to use with *McGuffey's Reader* or *Struwwelpeter*

~ Discuss (in small groups, as a whole group, or individually through journaling) what lessons these stories are trying to teach.

- Do the consequences the children receive make sense? Can you think of some better consequences?

- Many adults in the nineteenth century thought that frightening children with outrageous consequences was a good way to teach them. Do you agree?

- Would these stories keep you from doing what the children in the stories did? Why or why not?

~ Draw/paint illustrations for these stories.

~ Act out the stories for your class or another class.

~ Write or act out a story that teaches the same lesson, but that takes place today instead of in the nineteenth century.

- How would the situation or problem be similar or different?
- How would the consequences be similar or different?
"Here, Charlotte," said Mamma one day,
"These stockings knit while I'm away;
And should you fail, be sure you'll find
Mamma is strict, although she's kind."

But Charlotte took a lazy fit,
And did not feel inclined to knit;
And soon upon the ground let fall
Needles, and worsted, hose, and all.

"I shall not knit" said she "not I;
At least not now, but by and by;"
Then stretched, and yawned, and rubbed her eyes,
Like sluggards, when' tis time to rise.

But when Mamma came home, and found
The work all strewed upon the ground,
Quoth she, "You will not knit, and so
To school barefooted you shall go."

This put poor Charlotte in a fright,
And though she knew it served her right,
She wept, and begged, and prayed; but still
She could not change her mother's will.

To school, where all were spruce and neat,
Poor Charlotte went with naked feet.
Some showed their pity, some their pride,
While Charlotte hid her face and cried.

- From Struwwelpeter
The Night Wanderer

When other children were asleep
Our Oswald down the stairs would creep,
    And to the fields he'd steal away,
    Quite slyly by himself to play.
Sometimes he took the powder-horn,
    And with the powder burnt the corn;
Sometimes he hid behind a tree,
    And rushing out quite suddenly,
Would make a loud and fearful cry,
    And frighten all the passers-by.
Indeed, it was his chief delight
To run away from home at night.
His parents shook their heads, and said,
    "Oh, Oswald, stay at home in bed,
For if you out at night do roam
    A bat you surely will become."
But all their talking was in vain;
Still Oswald would go out again;
But, oh! just as his friends had said,
One night, as round the fields he sped,
Upon him came a wondrous change;
"Ah, me!" he cried, "How very strange!
I feel that I become so small
    And now — I cannot walk at all.
I put my hands up to my head,
    But find a bat's face in its stead;
And now — my hands are gone. Oh dear!
    Instead of arms what have I here?
Such very, very curious things.
Why, can they be? Oh, yes, they're wings.
    Alas! Alas! What shall I do?
My parents' words are coming true.
    An ugly bat I have become,
    And never more shall I go home."

Oh! yes, my dears, it was too true;
    An ugly bat away he flew;
His parents' tears streamed down like rain;
    They never saw their child again.

-From Struwwelpeter
Many school children in the nineteenth century learned to read using McGuffey’s readers. Lessons about how to behave were also common in their readings.

LESSON XXIV.

BEAUTIFUL HANDS.

1. “O Miss Roberts! what coarse-looking hands Mary Jessup has!” said Daisy Marvin, as she walked home from school with her teacher.

2. “In my opinion, Daisy, Mary’s hands are the prettiest in the class.”

3. “Why, Miss Roberts, they are as red and hard as they can be. How they would look if she were to try to play on a piano!” exclaimed Daisy.

4. Miss Roberts took Daisy’s hands in hers, and said, “Your hands are very soft and white, Daisy—just the hands to look beautiful on a piano; yet they lack one beauty that Mary’s hands have. Shall I tell you what the difference is?”

5. “Yes, please, Miss Roberts.”

6. “Well, Daisy, Mary’s hands are always busy. They wash dishes; they make fires; they hang out clothes, and help to wash them, too; they sweep, and dust, and sew; they are always trying to help her poor, hard-working mother.

7. “Besides, they wash and dress the children; they mend their toys and dress their dolls; yet, they find time to bathe the head of the little girl who is so sick in the next house to theirs.

8. “They are full of good deeds to every living thing. I have seen them patting the tired horse and the lame dog in the street.

They are always ready to help those who need help.”

9. “I shall never think Mary’s hands are ugly any more, Miss Roberts.”

10. “I am glad to hear you say that, Daisy; and I must tell you that they are beautiful because they do their work gladly and cheerfully.”

11. “O Miss Roberts! I feel so ashamed of myself, and so sorry,” said Daisy, looking into her teacher’s face with tearful eyes.

12. “Then, my dear, show your sorrow by deeds of kindness. The good alone are really beautiful.”
McGuffey's Readers

Many school children in the nineteenth century learned to read using McGuffey's readers. Lessons about how to behave were also common in their readings.

THIRD READER.

LESSON VII.

falsely at tend' try'ant cond'uct there'fore

guilty haste reg'u lar strug'gled ign'o rant

THE TRUANT.

1. James Brown was ten years old when his parents sent him to school. It was not far from his home, and therefore they sent him by himself.

2. But, instead of going to school, he was in the habit of playing truant. He would go into the fields, or spend his time with idle boys.

3. But this was not all. When he went home, he would falsely tell his mother that he had been to school, and had said his lessons very well.

4. One fine morning, his mother told James to make haste home from school, for she wished, after he had come back, to take him to his aunt's.

5. But, instead of minding her, he went off to the water, where there were some boats. There he met plenty of idle boys.

6. Some of these boys found that James had money, which his aunt had given him; and he was led by them to hire a boat, and to go with them upon the water.

7. Little did James think of the danger into which he was running. Soon the wind began to blow, and none of them knew how to manage the boat.

8. For some time, they struggled against the wind and the tide. At last, they became so tired that they could row no longer.

9. A large wave upset the boat, and they were all thrown into the water. Think of James Brown, the truant, at this time!

10. He was far from home, known by no one. His parents were ignorant of his danger. He was struggling in the water, on the point of being drowned.

11. Some men, however, saw the boys, and went out to them in a boat. They reached them just in time to save them from a watery grave.

12. They were taken into a house, where their clothes were dried. After a while, they were sent home to their parents.

13. James was very sorry for his conduct, and he was never known to be guilty of the same thing again.

14. He became regular at school, learned to attend to his books, and, above all, to obey his parents perfectly.
**Etiquette of the Table**

**Objective:** To examine table manners with an historical perspective, to build confidence and group cohesion through drama.

**Background Information**

In Victorian times table manners were extremely important, and children learned them from parents, governesses, and books of etiquette.

**Activity**

Brainstorm a list of table manners which modern children are expected to follow. Share the attached list of manners from *Never Give a Lady a Restive Horse* by Thomas E. Hill. Allow a few moments for the children to peruse them and ask questions about the confusing ones.

In pairs, have students choose a manner to act out, with or without words. Once the pair is ready, they perform their skits in front of the group. The rest of the group takes turns guessing until they discover the right manner.

**Discussion Questions:**

~ Which manners are we still familiar with today?
~ Which manners are different from today?
~ Which of the manners would be the hardest for you to follow if you were growing up in Victorian times? Why?
~ Would you like to attend a proper Victorian dinner party? Why or why not?

Try to eat a meal using proper Victorian manners!
Etiquette of the Table

Don’t pick up your fork or knife until you have been served.

Eat slowly to enjoy Better health, Greater wealth, Longer Life & More happiness.

Take what you are served even if you don’t like it, because Eccentricity should be avoided at the table.

Try to keep the tablecloth clean.

We no longer put knives in our mouths, as was formerly the custom.

Punctuality is necessary.

Ladies sit down before the gentlemen.

Do not study or smell the food before you take it.

As you take the food, make no special comments or praise over it.

Do not talk with your mouth full.

Do not fill your mouth too full.

Do not open your mouth while chewing.

Do not leave the table with food in your mouth.

Do not put your hand in your mouth while eating.

Do not cut bread, break it instead.

Feel free to take the last piece, there is probably more.

Use your napkin frequently.

Don’t wear gloves at the table.

Feel free to eat the corn off the cob.

Leave the table to sneeze or cough.

Remove bones or cherry pits from your mouth with your fork, not your fingers.

Don’t curl your feet under your chair.

Don’t stretch your feet out so far under the table that they touch someone else’s.
Baking in the Nineteenth Century

Name: ____________________

Objectives: To introduce changes in domestic science, practice cooking, and work with measurements.

Background Information

If you have made cookies, you probably measured in cups and teaspoons. In the Ramseys' time, a recipe might have called for "one goblet of flour." A goblet is a water glass. The Ramseys' goblet may have been a different size than their neighbor's goblet, so they would use a different amount of flour, and their cookies would not turn out the same. In order to make sure that this didn't happen, recipes started using weight as a way to measure ingredients.

Anna Ramsey saved her cookbooks with many cookie recipes. Below is a sugar cookie recipe from *Mrs. Parloa's New Cookbook* (by Maria Parloa, Boston, 1880) and a modern recipe.

Activity

1. Not only do we measure differently today, we like food to taste differently. Make the following recipe, and notice how it differs from cookies you usually eat.

   **1880s Sugar Cookies**

   1 cup sugar  
   ½ cup butter  
   1½ cups flour  
   ½ tsp. baking powder dissolved in 2 tsp. milk  
   1 egg yolk  
   Flavor to taste

   Roll thin, cut out, brush egg white and water on cookies, & bake in quick oven.

2. In groups of four, write a recipe that you think would be more familiar to us today. Make that recipe.

3. On a separate sheet of paper, answer these questions as a group:

   - Do you like the changes your group made to the recipe?
   - What could make it even better?
   - Why do you think cookies taste differently today?
   - Talk and write about how your group worked together.
Victorian Children’s Games

Anita, Ramsey and Laura, the children who grew up in the Ramsey House, played games like these!

Parlor Games (to be played indoors)

Quakers

This is a friendly morning greeting activity!

Setup: Players seated in a circle.

Method: One player turns to his/her neighbor, and chants: “Neighbor, neighbor, how are thee?”

The response is: “Very well, I thank thee.”

“How is neighbor next to thee?”

“I don’t know but I’ll go see.”

And so the play continues around the circle.

Shadow Verbs

Shadow Verbs is not only a fun excuse to do some acting, but is also a nice review of verbs! This dramatic game is called a “Quiet Game For Hot Weather” by The American Girls Handy Book, but can be played any time of the year.

Setup: For a truly Victorian feel, hang a white sheet, with a large lamp behind it, so that the action can be seen in silhouette. Or have the students simply act in front of the class.

Method: Two students, the “actors,” leave the room, and the rest of the class decides on a verb to mime, and a word with which it rhymes. They then call the actors back in, and tell them: “The verb we have chosen rhymes with __________.” The actors consult on what their first guess will be, and step in front of the class, (or between the lamp and the sheet, if being done in silhouette) and mime the action. For example, if the class had given them the word “lake” they might mime “bake.”

If the actors have guessed the proper verb, the class claps their hands and a new pair of actors is chosen. If not, the class clucks their tongues, and the actors consult on their next guess. (It might be a good strategy to choose guesses in alphabetical order!)

Earth, Air, Fire, and Water

Setup: Players sitting in a circle. One player, the Roller, sits with a soft, small ball in the center.

Method: The Roller rolls the ball to someone and calls out: “Water!” The player who received the ball must instantly call out an animal that lives in the water. If s/he cannot name a water animal before the Roller counts to 10, s/he becomes the Roller. If air or earth is called, one must name an animal living there, and in the case of fire, something that can exist in fire.
RING ON A STRING

Setup: Players in a circle, a string being held by all players with a ring or a washer on it, and one Guesser in the center.

Method: The Guesser must guess who has the ring. The players are constantly passing the ring around the circle and pretending to be passing it if they do not have it. The Guesser has 3 chances to find it, whomever is correctly guessed, or the last incorrectly guessed player becomes the Guesser.

KITTY WANTS A CORNER

Setup: Players standing in a circle, “Kitty” in the center.

Method: Kitty tells one of the players: “Kitty wants a corner,” and the reply is always: “Ask my neighbor,” and so Kitty must ask another. All the while, the other players are making silent deals with each other to swap spots in the circle, and are crossing the circle to do so. Kitty tries to take these spots before they are filled, and the player left without a spot is the new Kitty.

POOR KITTY

Setup: Players sitting in a circle, “Kitty” in the center.

Method: Kitty crawls around the circle, chooses a player, and “meows,” looking like a sad Kitty. The player says: “Poor Kitty!” (without smiling!) 3 times. If a smile appears, that player becomes Kitty.

CATERPILLAR

Setup: Enough chairs for each player in a circle.

Method: One player walks to the center of the circle, while the rest find seats. Once everyone is seated, players shift around the perimeter of the circle to fill whichever seat is vacant so that the middle person cannot sit in it. If the middle person does take the seat, the player to his/her left moves to the middle of the circle.

THIS IS MY EYE

Setup: Players sitting in a circle.

Method: One player points to his/her eye and calls it something else. The next player points to that body part and calls it yet another name.

Anita: (pointing to her eye) This is my chin, Ramsey.
Ramsey: (pointing to his chin) This is my thumb, Laura.
Laura: (pointing to her thumb) This is my nose, Minnie.
Minnie: (pointing to her cheek) This is my cheek, Nellie.

Minnie has made a mistake, and now must serve as a judge.
**Teapot**

**Setup:** 3 students in front of class.

**Method:** The 3 students secretly choose a common word to replace with an uncommon or old-fashioned word. For example, “pencil” is now “teapot.” They have a conversation in front of the class in which they substitute the word “teapot” for “pencil.” The rest of the class must try to guess which word had been substituted, and with what.

**Marbles**

**Setup:** A 9-inch circle drawn on the ground, each player has one marble inside the circle, and one for shooting.

**Method:** Players stand 6 feet from the circle and take turns rolling their marbles into it. If a player hits a marble out of the circle, s/he shoots again.

**Lawn Games (to be played outdoors or in a gym)**

**Blind Man's Bluff**

**Setup:** Open field, one blindfolded player.

**Method:** The Blind Man is turned around 3 times, and then tries to tag the other players. Whoever is tagged becomes the Blind Man.

**Blue Tom**

**Setup:** Open field, everyone standing in a line on one side, with It in the middle, facing them.

**Method:** It yells: “Blue Tom!” 3 times, and everybody runs to the other side of the field. It tags whom s/he can, and they join It in the middle. If It calls “Pink Tom” or “Blue James” and anyone makes a false start, they become It, and the game starts over. The same penalty applies if anyone It captured calls out “Blue Tom.”

**Cross Tag**

**Setup:** Open field, an It, and a Runner.

**Method:** The Runner is given a short head start before It chases. Others try to cross in between the two. If this happens, It yells the Crosser's name, and runs after him/her. Once a player is tagged, s/he becomes It.

**Birds**

**Setup:** Open field, a row of "birds" and It facing them.

**Method:** The teacher whispers a color in each player's ear, being sure to have some repeated colors. It calls out "Blue Bird!" and anyone whose color is blue tries to cross the field without being tagged. The first person tagged becomes the new It. If It calls a color that no one has, the teacher calls out "I haven't got any!" and chooses a new It.
ST. PAUL

Setup: Open field, 2 teams facing each other on opposite sides.

Method: Team 1 secretly agrees on an occupation, then Team 2 announces, “Here we come!” and marches toward Team 1.

   Team 2: Where from?
   Team 1: St. Paul!
   Team 2: What’s your trade?

At this point both teams should be facing each other in the center of the field, and Team 1 mimes their occupation. Team 2 yells guesses, once someone guesses correctly, Team 1 shouts: “Yes!” and runs back to their start line, while Team 2 tries to tag them. Anyone tagged becomes part of the other team, and play is reversed.

JUMP ROPE GAMES

Setup: Long jump rope, 2 people turning the rope, rest of class in line to jump.

Method: 1) Jump rope from one foot to the other, singing:
   Mammy, Daddy jumped the gutter,
   Loaf of bread and a pound of butter.

   2) Hold a stone in one hand. Jump 3 times.
      Put the stone on the ground. Jump 3 times.

   3) One by one, everyone runs under the rope, jumps once, runs out.

   4) Raise the rope higher after each jump.

When somebody misses a jump or touches the rope, s/he becomes a rope turner.
Objective: To create artwork which was designed for children in the nineteenth Century.

These “Living Cards” can be drawn or cut out from pictures. You may want to add texture such as tissue paper or pipe cleaner steams!

These pictures come from *The American Girl’s Handy Book* by Lina Beard and Adelia Beard, currently published by David R. Godine, Publisher.
Objective: To create artwork which was designed for children in the nineteenth Century.

Notice that the head in these pictures remains the same, while different bodies are attached! This “transformation Scrapbook” can be put into a flip-book, or can be loose sheets. The pictures can be drawn or cut out of a magazine. You may want to include Victorian fashions!

These pictures come from *The American Girl’s Handy Book* by Lina Beard and Adelia Beard, currently published by David R. Godine, Publisher.
Objective: To take part in an act of etiquette, to give the Alexander Ramsey House feedback on your experience.

Background Information

Proper Victorians knew the importance of writing to each other. It meant that they would be remembered and it expressed their gratitude.

Activity

Practice this area of etiquette by thanking the Ramsey House for your tour. In your note, include something you learned, something you enjoyed, and something you would like to know or experience.

Once you have written this note, think of someone else in your life who might appreciate a thank you note!