

## The Language of the Fan

### *Victorian Communication & Culture Teacher Resource Packet*

Presented by **Rayma Volkmer**  
Indian Creek Historical Fashions  
*Where History Comes to Life*

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#### PROGRAM OVERVIEW

*The Language of the Fan* is an engaging and interactive living history program that explores how people communicated through subtle gestures and coded signals during the Victorian era.

At a time when social rules limited open expression—especially for women—fans became powerful tools of **nonverbal communication, social signaling, and personal expression.**

Through **demonstration, audience participation, and hands-on interaction,** students learn how a simple object could carry complex meaning.

This program blends **history, culture, communication, and creativity** into a memorable learning experience.

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#### LEARNING OBJECTIVES

Students will:

- Understand the role of nonverbal communication in historical societies
  - Explore how social expectations shaped communication methods
  - Learn specific fan signals and their meanings
  - Analyze how communication can be both spoken and unspoken
  - Apply creative thinking through interactive participation
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#### CURRICULUM CONNECTIONS

This program supports:

- U.S. History (19th Century / Victorian Era)
- Social Studies & Cultural Norms
- Communication Studies

- Language Arts (interpretation & expression)
  - Sociology & Social Behavior
  - Performing Arts & Creative Expression
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## PRE-PROGRAM DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

- How do we communicate without words today?
  - What are examples of body language?
  - Why might people need to communicate secretly?
  - How do social rules affect how we express ourselves?
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## KEY VOCABULARY

- Nonverbal Communication
  - Gesture
  - Etiquette
  - Social Norms
  - Expression
  - Symbolism
  - Victorian Era
  - Decorum
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## WHAT STUDENTS WILL EXPERIENCE

During the program, students will:

- Learn authentic fan signals used in the Victorian era
- Practice communicating messages using fan movements
- Interpret hidden meanings in gestures
- Participate in interactive activities and demonstrations

Students quickly discover:

**Communication is more than words—it's movement, intention, and meaning.**

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## **POST-PROGRAM ACTIVITIES**

### **Writing Prompt**

“Create your own secret communication system. How would it work?”

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### **Discussion Questions**

- Why was nonverbal communication important in the Victorian era?
  - How do social expectations influence communication today?
  - Can communication be misunderstood? Why?
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### **Creative Activity**

- Create a “fan code” for your classroom
  - Perform a short silent scene using gestures only
  - Design your own symbolic communication system
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## **EXTENSION ACTIVITIES**

- Compare Victorian communication to texting and emojis
  - Explore etiquette rules in different time periods
  - Study how body language varies across cultures
  - Discuss how communication has changed over time
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## **WHY THIS PROGRAM MATTERS**

This program helps students understand:

- How communication evolves over time
- The impact of social expectations on expression
- The importance of interpreting meaning beyond words

**It connects history to modern communication in a way students immediately understand.**

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## **INTERACTIVE LEARNING EXPERIENCE**

This is a highly participatory program:

- Students actively practice communication techniques
- Audience interaction is central to the experience
- Learning is hands-on, visual, and memorable

**Students don't just learn—they engage.**

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## **GRANT FUNDING INFORMATION**

### **Funding May Be Available**

This program may qualify for funding through Humanities Nebraska.

As a **Humanities Nebraska Scholar**, Rayma Volkmer provides programming that meets the standards for humanities-based educational experiences.


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### **How to Apply:**

1. Visit Humanities Nebraska
  2. Review grant opportunities
  3. Submit an application
  4. Schedule your program upon approval
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### **Note for Educators**

Many schools, libraries, and organizations use grant funding to bring unique, high-quality educational programs into their classrooms and communities.

 Assistance and supporting documentation available upon request

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## **BOOKING INFORMATION**

Programs available for:

- School Assemblies
- Classroom Presentations
- Homeschool Groups
- Library & Museum Programs



Serving Nebraska, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and surrounding regions.

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## CONTACT

### **Indian Creek Historical Fashions**

*Where History Comes to Life*

-  Contact to schedule your program
-  Ask about curriculum support and grant funding

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