

"What Are You Like" Victorian parlor game

"What are you Like?" Victorian parlor game

c. 1870s



Title Statement

"What Are You Like" Victorian parlor game "What Are You Like" Victorian parlor game MSS 16880

Author: Ellen Welch

Publication Statement

Publisher: Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library
P.O. Box 400110
University of Virginia
Charlottesville, Virginia 22904-4110
URL: <https://small.library.virginia.edu/>



2025-03-10

This record is made available under an Universal 1.0 Public Domain Dedication Creative Commons license.

Notes

Orange slip from Yuki to Preservation. Separation sheets?

Profile Description

Creation: This finding aid was produced using ArchivesSpace on 2026-03-05 17:46:16 +0000.

Language Usage: Description is written in: English, Latin script.

Descriptive Rules: Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Descriptive Summary

Unit ID

MSS 16880

Unit ID

[Archival Resource Key](#)

Unit ID

/repositories/3/resources/1743

Unit Date

c. 1870s

Mixed Materials [X006178784]

1 (Flat_Box)

Language

English

Extent

0.49 Cubic Feet 1 small oversize flat box 19 X 15 X 3

Repository

Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library

Administrative Information

Conditions Governing Access

The collection is open for research use.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

This collection was a purchase from Honey & Wax to the Small Special Collections Library at the University of Virginia Library on 11 October 2024

Preferred Citation

MSS 16880, "What Are You Like?", Albert and Shirley Small Special Collections Library, University of Virginia Library.

Biographical / Historical

During the Victorian era parlor games were a popular activity for both men and women. With the rise of industrialization, people had much more time for leisure activities which often included these games. The games could be played with nothing at all or sometimes items found in a common household, and it is for that reason that they were so accessible and remain so to this day.

The Victorian home was the realm of a dutiful wife; therefore, the parlor fell under her dominion and cultivated the image of a cultured and well rounded family if decorated properly. While most rooms in the home were for a specific gender (for example the smoke room for men and the boudoir for women), the parlor was a rare space in which the genders could mingle and court in a proper fashion. This meant that games were a realm for both men and women to participate in, and the games often involved logic or word play. They were popular with the upper and middle classes.

Some examples of these games are charades, Pass the Slipper, Blind Man's Bluff, Sculptor, Shadow Games, Consequences, Sardines, Kim's Game, Dictionary, Ball of Wool, Tiddlywinks, Bullet Pudding, and many more.

Content Description

This collection contains a Victorian parlor game titled "What are you Like?" The game, published by D. Sarney of Leamington, United Kingdom, in the 1870s, includes nineteen questionnaire sheets.

The sheets are character sketches created by a group of Victorian men and women, presumably as part of a house party. Each sheet has a photograph or sketch of the player. Each sheet poses eight questions to be answered with an illustration: "Proverb or Motto," "Favourite occupation," "What you most want," "Special Aversion," "Favourite place," "Favourite Character," "Favourite Animal," and "Favourite Dish."

The completed questionnaires vary widely in draftsmanship and detail, they provide a lively survey of middle-class Victorian tastes. Domestic pets are cherished: one woman poses for her photograph with her cat. Outdoor sports are well-represented, from golf to badminton to boating. "Home" is a popular choice for favorite place, with one player depicting himself in a candlelit bath, surrounded by books, before a roaring fire, while another player draws what appears to be her own grave. Some respond to the questionnaire prompts literally, while others offer symbols and allegories. One player, pressed to answer "what you most want," gives up and writes in pencil: "impossible to say." A pebbled cloth portfolio with ribbon ties houses the game sheets.

One sheet bears the 1873 copyright notice of "L. Wheler," presumably a member of the local Warwickshire family; "E.G. Wheler" is one of the players whose character sketch is preserved in this portfolio. One of the sheets is blank, while eighteen are filled out.

Keywords

games

Indoor games

Women -- Social conditions