Clues for solving the secret message

Below are clues to help you solve the secret message puzzle. We have chosen these clues to make it a little easier for you to solve the message, but the important thing is that none of these clues are actually specific to the message -- they're just facts about English that you (or a computer) could use to help solve any similar secret message.

1. The message is in English. What words in English only have one letter?

```
♥
▲
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
●
```

2. What are some words in English that only have two letters?

- Concentrate on just the first two words in the message. What combinations would make sense grammatically? Have you figured out any of the letters? If so, write them under the symbols at the top of this page.
- 4. Common words in English:

One-letter words: A, I

Two-letter words: OF, TO, IN, IT, IS, BE, AS, AT, SO, WE, HE, BY, OR, ON, DO, IF, ME, MY, UP, AN, AM **Three-letter words:** THE, AND, FOR, ARE, BUT, NOT, YOU, ALL, ANY, CAN, HAD, HER, WAS, ONE, OUR, OUT, DAY, GET, HAS, HIM, HIS, HOW, MAN, NEW, NOW, OLD, SEE, TWO, WAY, WHO, BOY, DID, ITS, LET, PUT, SAY, SHE, TOO, USE

Four-letter words: THAT, WITH, HAVE, THIS, WILL, YOUR, FROM, THEY, KNOW, WANT, BEEN, GOOD, MUCH, SOME, TIME

Developed by Camille Cobb and Lucy Simko in the UW Security & Privacy Research Lab Originally used at the CSE Open House 2017 Reuse with acknowledgement is encouraged

- 5. The most common first letter of words is: T
- 6. The most common symbol at the beginning of words in the message above is: *
- The most common letter in English writing is usually E (this might not hold true for this message, though). After that, the next most common letters are T A O and I. (This clue might not be helpful quite yet, but keep it in mind as you keep working.)
- 8. To the right is a breakdown of the most common symbols in the secret message: Note: If you've ever watched Wheel of Fortune, you might have noticed that one of the first guesses is often "T" (Players have to "buy" vowels)
- At this point, you might notice that there are some words with only one letter unsolved. Like this one (in the last line of the secret message): ^{*}[™][∛]^{*}
- 10. Figuring out the last letter missing in that word will leave a few new words with just one letter missing

(in the 6th line of the message):

11. Figuring out the last letter missing in that word leaves this one with just one letter missing (in the last

line of the message):

12. This might also be a good time to take another look at the remaining unsolved two-letter words, like this one from the first line (you should know what the first letter is by now, and remember that the second

symbol in this word is very common in this message):

13. The most common double letters (same letter twice in a row) are: **SS EE TT FF LL MM OO** (another one is **NN** ... it's less common in most English writing, but it does appear in this message)

14. This word with double letters might be a good place to start, since you should know the first two letters

by now: 200

Developed by Camille Cobb and Lucy Simko in the UW Security & Privacy Research Lab Originally used at the CSE Open House 2017 Reuse with acknowledgement is encouraged

21
18
17
14
13
12
12

- 15. Let's look at the three-letter words again. Like this one, which you should know the first two letters of (second line): *28
- 16. This four letter word should have just one letter missing now, too (middle of third line):
- 17. Use the process of elimination to figure out the missing letter in this two-letter word (it can't be one of the letters you've already figured out) (6th line): ^Ω²
- 18. If that last clue is still holding you up, another hint is that the last line is a question. What are some three-letter words that might be at the beginning of a question?
- 19. Here's another word that should just have one letter missing by now: *
- 20. This three-letter word appears several times throughout the message. Does that help *you* narrow down which three-letter word it could be? [⊠]
- 21. Did you notice that this four-letter word starts with the same three letters as the word we just figured out? This should help you figure out what the symbol is that looks like a star. (4th line) [△]

22. At this point, you can probably use context clues to figure out the rest!