

Secret Codes

An Introduction

Deepak Kumar
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Based on: The Code Book, Simon Singh, Anchor Books 1999.

Secret Communication Essential Elements

- Sender
- Receiver
- Messenger/Medium
- Message

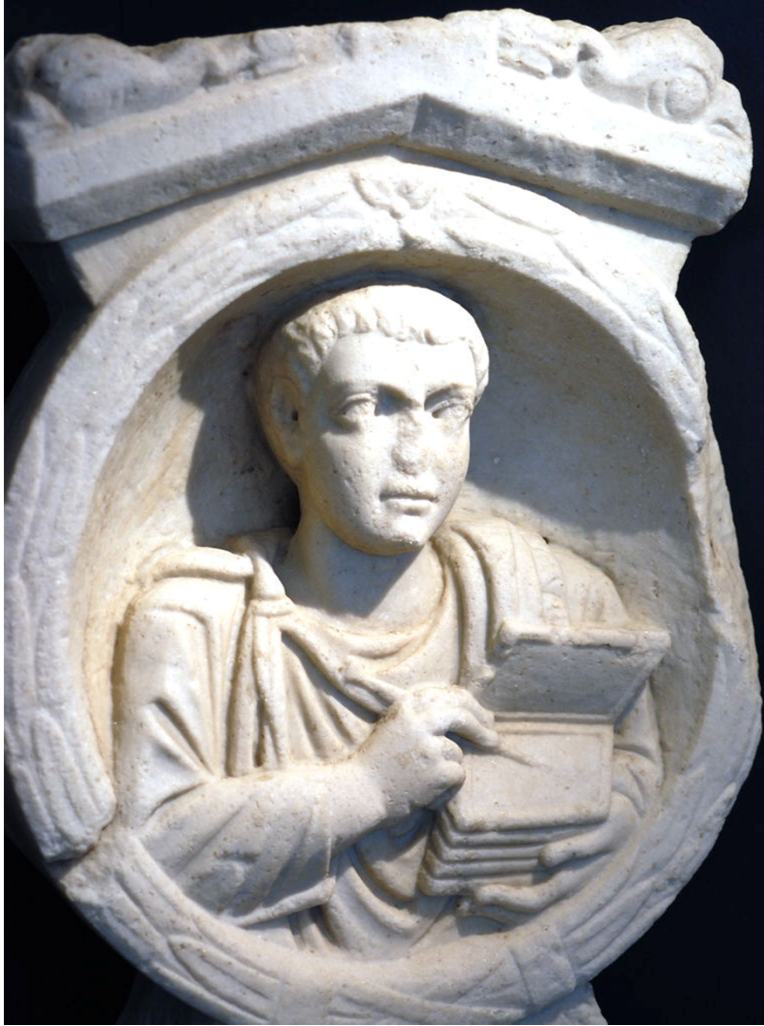
Steganography

- “concealed writing” from the Greek words *steganos* (στεγανός) meaning "covered or protected", and *graphei* (γραφή) meaning "writing"
- Secret messages were hidden or memorized by runners.
- Demaratus tells Athens of Persia's plans for attack by writing message under the wax on a tablet (5th century B.C.)

Replica of a Wax Tablet



Tablets...



Other Means of Hiding messages

- Greek Histiaieus encouraged Aristagoras of Miletus to revolt against the Persian King. Writes message on the shaved head of the messenger, and sends him after his hair grew.
- Ancient Chinese silk balls.
- Pliny the Elder's use of invisible ink (1st century A.D.).
- Giovanni Porta's secret message in a hard boiled egg (16th century).
- Writing inside writing. Masking.
E.g. [Spy Letters of the American revolution](#)

August 10, 1777 -- Henry Clinton to John Burgoyne
From the Gold Star Collection

You will have heard, Dr Sir I doubt not long before this / can have reached you that Sir W. Howe is gone from hence. The / Rebels imagine that he is gone to the Eastward, by this time however he has filled Chesapeak bay with surprize and terror.

Washington marched the greater part of the Rebels to Philadelphia / in order to oppose Sir Wm's. army. I hear he is now returned upon / finding none of our troops landed but am not sure of this, great part / of his troops are returned for certain. I am sure this countermarching / must be ruin to them. I am left to command here, half of my force may / I am sure defend everything here with much safety. I shall therefore / send Sir W. 4 or 5 Bat [talion] ns. I have too small a force to invade the New England / provinces; they are too weak to make any effectual efforts against me and / you do not want any diversion in your favour. I can, therefore very well / spare him 1500 men. I shall try something certainly towards the close / of the year not till then at any rate. It may be of use to inform you that / report says all yields to you. I own to you that I think the business will / quickly be over now. Sr. W's move just at this time has been capital. / Wahingtons have been the worst he could take in every respect. / sincerely give you much joy on your success and am with / great Sincerity your [] / HC

You will have heard, Dr Sir I doubt not long before this
can have reached you that Sir W. Howe is gone from hence. The
Rebels imagine that he is gone to the Eastward, by this time
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in order to oppose Sir Wm's. army. I hear he is now returned upon
finding none of our troops landed but am not sure of this, great part
of his troops are returned for certain. I am ~~sure~~ ^{sure} this countermarching
must be ruin to them. I am left to command here, half of my force may
I am sure defend everything here with much safety. I shall therefore
send Sir W. 4 or 5 Bat^{ns}. I have too small a force to invade the New England
provinces; they are too weak to make any effectual efforts against me and
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Washington have been the worst he could take in every respect.
sincerely give you much joy on your success and am with
great Sincerity your [] / HC

From the Collections of the Clements Library



9-20
Sir W. Howe
is gone to the
Chesapeake bay with
the greater part of the
Army. I hear he is
landed but am not
certain. I am
left to command
here with
too small a force
to make any effective
diversion in your favour.
I shall try something
at any rate. It may be of use
to you. I own to you I think
W. will move just at this time
the worst he could take
much joy on your success

Sir. W. Howe
is gone to the
Chesapeak bay with
the greatest part of the
army. I hear he is
landed but am not
certain. I am
left to command
here with
too small a force
to make any effectual
diversion in your favour.
I shall try something
at any rate. It may be of use
to you. I own to you I think
Sr W's move just at this time
the worst he could take.
Much joy on your success.

92-30
Sir W. Howe
is gone to the
Chesapeak bay with
the greatest part of the
army. I hear he is
landed but am not
certain. I am
left to command
here with
too small a force
to make any effectual
diversion in your favour.
I shall try something
at any rate. It may be of use
to you. I own to you I think
Sr W's move just at this time
the worst he could take.
Much joy on your success.

Cryptography

- from Greek κρυπτός, “hidden, secret”; and *graphei* (γραφή) meaning “writing”
- Involves hiding the *meaning* of the message using *encryption*.
 - Transposition
 - Substitution Cipher

Transposition

- Letters in the message are rearranged.
- No new letters are introduced.
- Encrypted message is an *anagram*.

Tom Marvolo Riddle

Mr. Mojo Risin'

Paul Sernine

Transposition

- Letters in the message are rearranged.
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Tom Marvolo Riddle

I am Lord Voldemort

Mr. Mojo Risin'

Paul Sernine

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I am Lord Voldemort

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Jim Morrison

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Transposition

- Letters in the message are rearranged.
- No new letters are introduced.
- Encrypted message is an *anagram*.

Tom Marvolo Riddle

I am Lord Voldemort

Mr. Mojo Risin'

Jim Morrison

Paul Sernine

Arsene Lupin

How many transpositions??

- Given a message with N letters
- There are $N!$ transpositions

tom

TOM, TMO, MOT, MTO, OMT, OTM

$$3! = 3 \times 2 \times 1 = 6$$

Lord Voldemort

has $13! = 6,227,020,800$ transpositions!

Transposition: Two Rails

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B Y M W C L E E
R N A R O L G

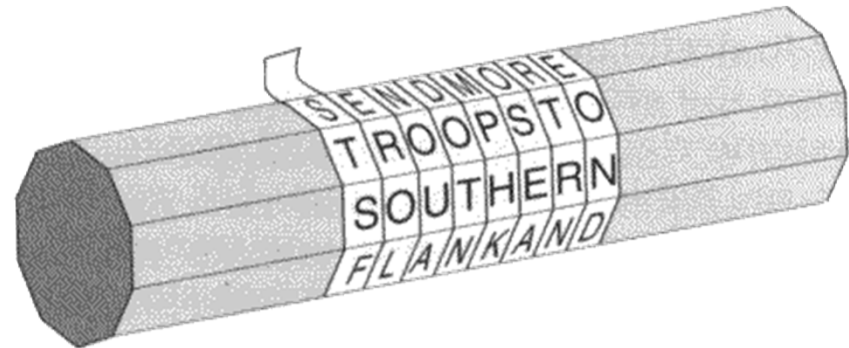
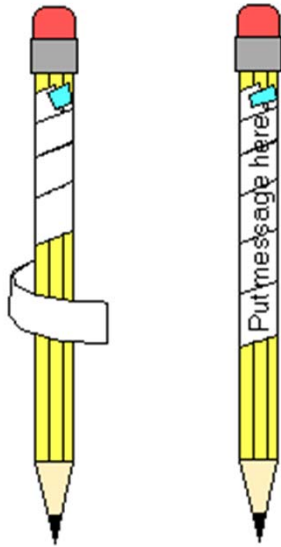
Transposition: Two Rails

BRYN MAWR COLLEGE

B Y M W C L E E
R N A R O L G

BYMWCLEERNAROLG

Transposition: Scytale (404 B.C.)



Cryptography

- from Greek κρυπτός, “hidden, secret”; and *graphei* (γραφή) meaning “writing”
- Involves hiding the *meaning* of the message using *encryption*.
 - Transposition
 - Substitution Cipher

Substitution Ciphers

- **Plain alphabet**

a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z

- **Cipher alphabet**

A B C D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z

- **Monoalphabetic Substitution Cipher:**

When the cipher alphabet consists of letters (or symbols), or a mix of both.

Substitution Ciphers

- **Caesar Cipher**

a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C

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EUBQ PDZU FROOHJH

- **Random Pairing**

A D H I K M O R S U W Y Z
V X B G J C Q L N E F P T

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HLPC CVFL MQRRUIU

Substitution Ciphers

- **Atbash (Hebrew)**

a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
Z Y X W V U T S R Q P O N M L K J I H G F E D C B A

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YIBM NZDI XLOOVTV

- **ROT13**

a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C D E F G H I J K L M

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OELA ZNJR PBYYRTR

Substitution Ciphers

- **Caesar Cipher**

Only 25 distinct ciphers possible.

a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
D E F G H I J K L M N O P Q R S T U V W X Y Z A B C

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EUBQ PDZU FROOHJH

- **Random Pairing**

A D H I K M O R S U W Y Z
V X B G J C Q L N E F P T

25! = over 400 Septillion (10^{24})
distinct ciphers possible!

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HLPC CVFL MQRRUIU

Substitution Ciphers

- **Using Keyphrase/Keyword**

From: BARACK OBAMA

You get: BARCKOM

a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
B A R C K O M N O P Q S T U V W X Y Z D E F G H I J

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AYIU TBGY RVSSKMK

Substitution Ciphers

- **Using Keyphrase/Keyword**

From: BARACK OBAMA

You get: BARCKOM

**Fewer than 25! Ciphers.
But still quite large.
Easier to remember the key.**

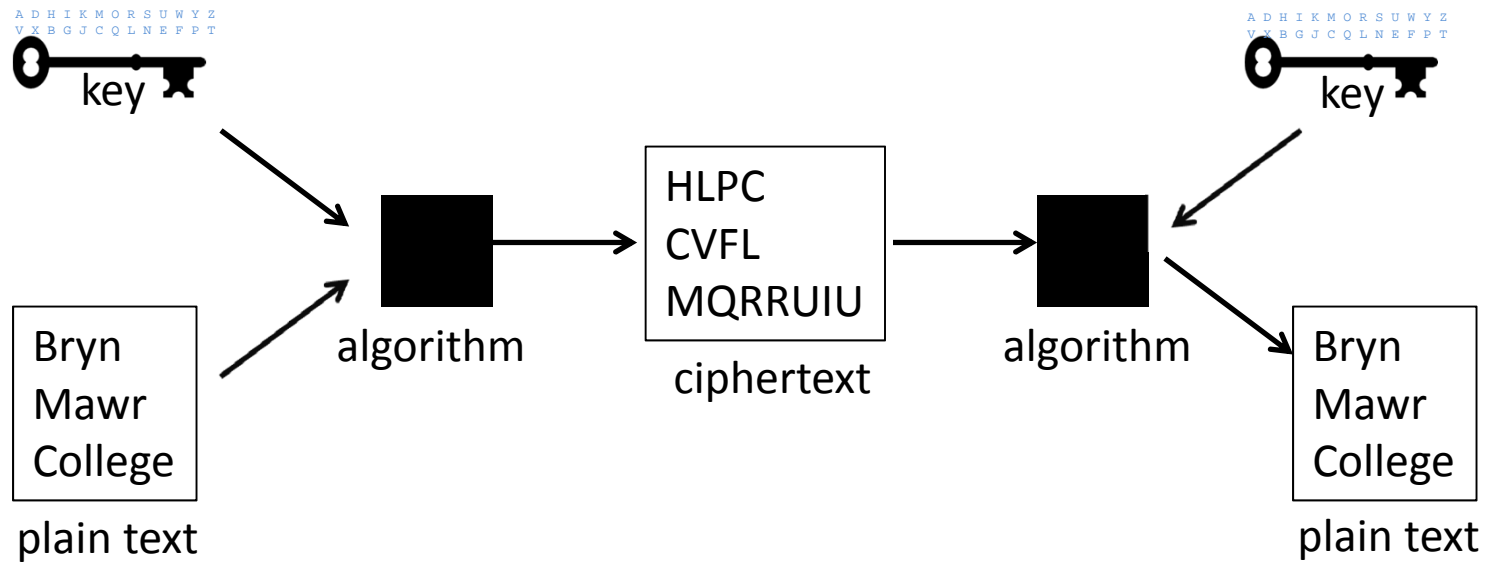
a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
B A R C K O M N O P Q S T U V W X Y Z D E F G H I J

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AYIU TBGY RVSSKMK

Cryptography: Basic Terminology

Sender

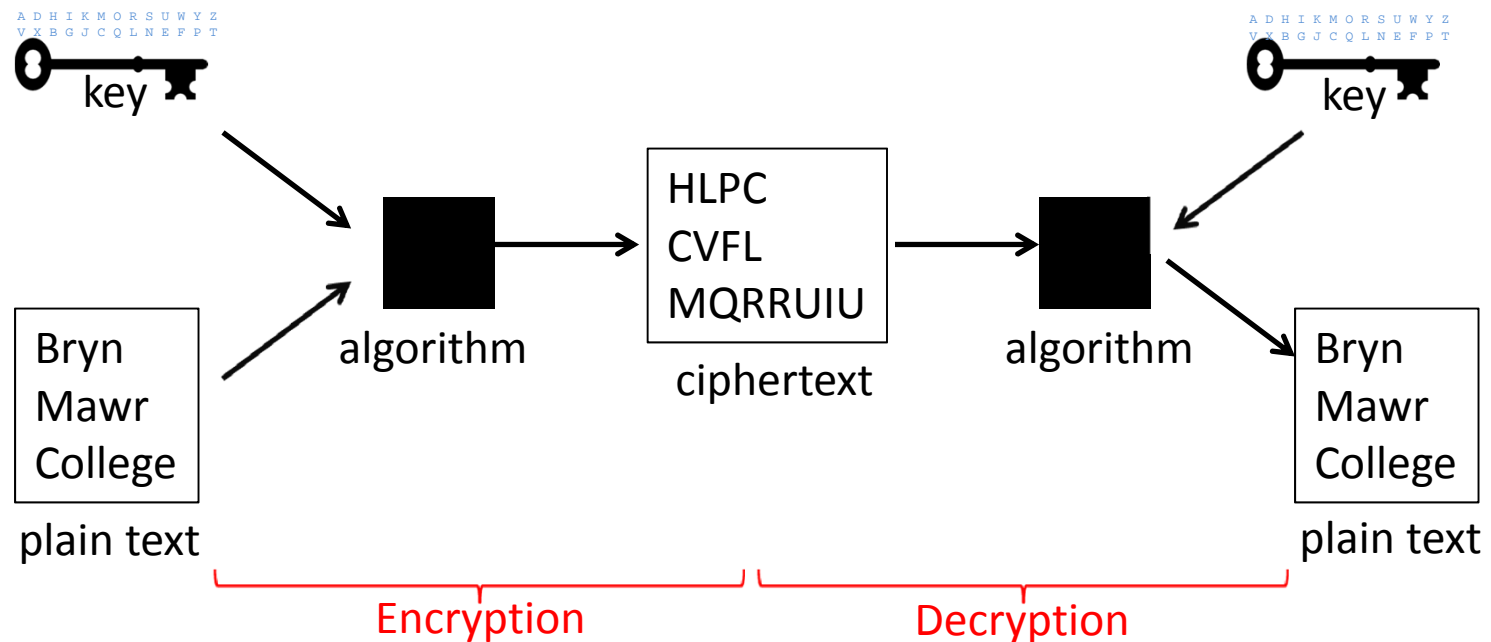
Receiver



Cryptography: Basic Terminology

Sender

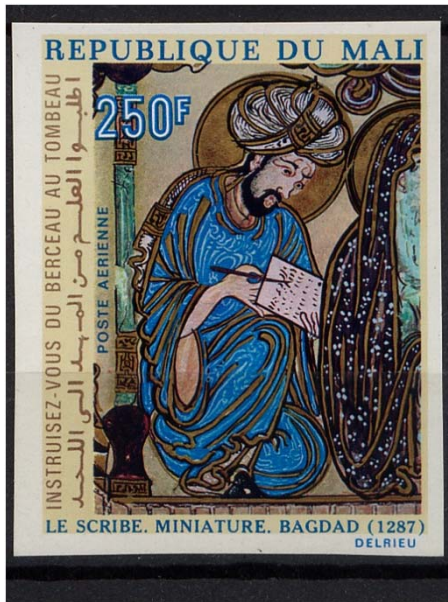
Receiver



Cryptanalysis

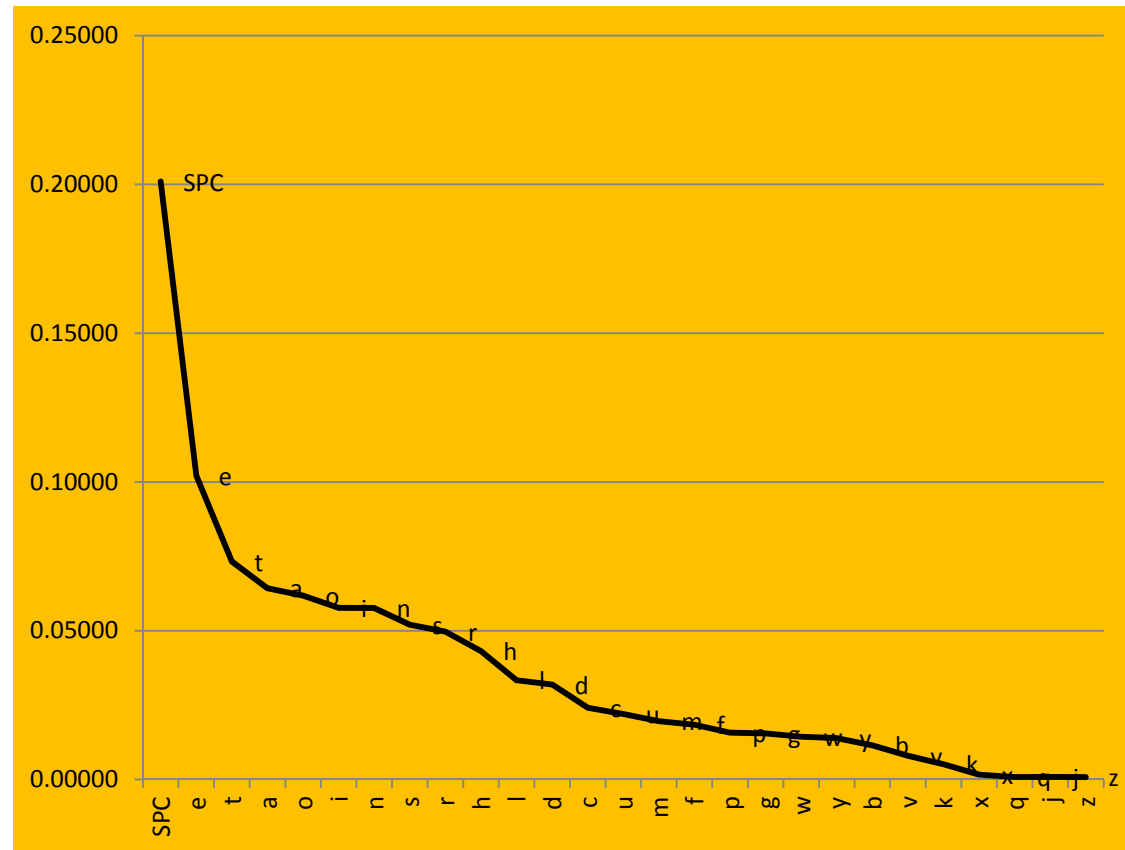
- The science (and art?) of unscrambling a message without knowledge of the key.
- **Frequency Analysis:** Pioneered by al Kindi in 9th century C.E. at Bait al-Hikmah (House of Wisdom) in Baghdad.
- Still widely used...

al Kindi



Text Analysis

a	0.06428
b	0.01147
c	0.02413
d	0.03188
e	0.10210
f	0.01842
g	0.01543
h	0.04313
i	0.05767
j	0.00082
k	0.00514
l	0.03338
m	0.01959
n	0.05761
o	0.06179
p	0.01571
q	0.00084
r	0.04973
s	0.05199
t	0.07327
u	0.02201
v	0.00800
w	0.01439
x	0.00162
y	0.01387
z	0.00077
SPC	0.20096



Cryptanalyzing Text

PCQ VMJYPD LBYK LYSO KBXBJXWXV BXV ZCJPO EYPD
KBXBJYUXJ LBJOO KCPK. CP LBO LBCMXPV XPV IYJKL PYDBL,
QBOP KBO BXV OPVOV LBO LXRO CI SX'XJMI, KBO JCKO XPV
EYKKOV LBO DJCMPV ZOICJO BYS, KXUYPD: "DJOXL EYPD, ICJ X
LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK Y BXNO ZOOP JOACMPLYPD LC UCM
LBO IXZROK CI FXKL XDOK XPV LBO RODOPVK CI XPAYOPL EYPDK.
SXU Y SXEO KC ZCRV XK LC AJXNO X IXNCMJ CI UCMJ SXGOKLU?"

OFYRCDMO, LXROK IJCS LBO LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK

Ciphertext Frequency Analysis

Letter	Frequency		Letter	Frequency	
	Occurences	Percentage		Occurences	Percentage
A	3	0.9	N	3	0.9
B	25	7.4	O	38	11.2
C	27	8.0	P	31	9.2
D	14	4.1	Q	2	0.6
E	5	1.5	R	6	1.8
F	2	0.6	S	7	2.1
G	1	0.3	T	0	0.0
H	0	0.0	U	6	1.8
I	11	3.3	V	18	5.3
J	18	5.3	W	1	0.3
K	26	7.7	X	34	10.1
L	25	7.4	Y	19	5.6
M	11	3.3	Z	5	1.5

Counting D's

PCQ VMJY**D** LBYK LYSO KBXBJXWXV BXV ZCJPO EY**D**
KBXBJYUXJ LBJOO KCPK. CP LBO LBCM**KXPV** XPV IYJKL PY**DBL**,
QBOP KBO BXV OPVOV LBO LXRO CI SX'XJMI, KBO JCKO XPV
EYKKOV LBO **DJ**CMPV ZOICJO BYS, KXUY**D**: "DJOXL EY**D**, ICJ X
LBCM**KXPV** XPV CPO PY**DBLK** Y BXNO ZOOP JOAC**MPLYD** LC UCM
LBO IXZROK CI FXKL X**D**OK XPV LBO ROD**OPVK** CI XPAYOPL EY**PD**K.
SXU Y SXEO KC ZCRV XK LC AJXNO X IXNCMJ CI UCMJ SXGOKLU?"

OFYRC**DMO**, LXROK IJCS LBO LBCM**KXPV** XPV CPO PY**DBLK**

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M	11	3.3	Z	5	1.5

O=e,t or a, X=e,t or a, P=e,t or a

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Identifying Vowels (O, X, or P?)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
O	1	9	0	3	1	1	1	0	1	4	6	0	1	2	2	8	0	4	1	0	0	3	0	1	1	2
X	0	7	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	4	6	3	0	3	1	9	0	2	4	0	3	3	2	0	0	1
P	1	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	9	9	0

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 QBOP KBO BXV OPVOV LBO LXRO CI SX'XJMI, KBO JCKO XPV
 EYKKOV LBO DJCMPV ZOICJO BYS, KXUYPD: "DJOXL EYPD, ICJ X
 LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK Y BXNO ZOOP JOACMPLYPD LC UCM
 LBO IXZROK CI FXKL XDOK XPV LBO RODOPVK CI XPAYOPL EYPDK.
 SXU Y SXEO KC ZCRV XK LC AJXNO X IXNCMJ CI UCMJ SXGOKLU?

OFYRCDMO, LXROK IJCS LBO LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK

Identifying Vowels (O, X, or P?)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z
O	1	9	0	3	1	1	1	0	1	4	6	0	1	2	2	8	0	4	1	0	0	3	0	1	1	2
X	0	7	0	1	1	1	1	0	2	4	6	3	0	3	1	9	0	2	4	0	3	3	2	0	0	1
P	1	0	5	6	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	2	2	0	8	0	0	0	0	0	0	11	0	9	9	0

- O and X appear next to most other letters, except 7 or 8 of them).
- P does not appear next to 15 letters.
- Therefore, O and X are vowels (either e or a). P is a consonant!

But is O = e or a? X = e or a?

Take another look at ciphertext...

O = e or a? X = e or a?

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EYKKOV LBO DJCMPV ZOICJO BYS, KXUYPD: "DJOXL EYPD, ICJ X
LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK Y BXNO ZOO JOACMPLYPD LC UCM
LBO IXZROK CI FXKL XDOK XPV LBO RODOPVK CI XPAYOPL EYPDK.
SXU Y SXEO KC ZCRV XK LC AJXNO X IXNCMJ CI UCMJ SXGOKLU?"

OFYRCDMO, LXROK IJCS LBO LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK

- OO appears twice, but XX never appears.
- In normal text, likely to see ee than aa
- Further, X appears by itself
- Therefore, perhaps X = a and O = e.
- And, since Y appears by itself, it must be that Y = i

Since O = e

Spotting the letter h (the, they, ...)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
after	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
before	0	0	9	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	4	2	0	1	2	2	3	0	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2

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 EYKKOV LBO DJCMPV ZOICJO BYS, KXUYPD: "DJOXL EYPD, ICJ X
 LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK Y BXNO ZOOP JOACMPLYPD LC UCM
 LBO IXZROK CI FXKL XDOK XPV LBO RODOPVK CI XPAYOPL EYPAK.
 SXU Y SXEO KC ZCRV XK LC AJXNO X IXNCMJ CI UCMJ SXGOKLU?"

O FYRCDMO, LXROK IJCS LBO LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK

Since O = e

Spotting the letter h (the, they, ...)

	A	B	C	D	E	F	G	H	I	J	K	L	M	N	O	P	Q	R	S	T	U	V	W	X	Y	Z	
after	0	1	0	0	1	0	1	0	0	1	0	4	0	0	0	2	5	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
before	0	0	9	0	2	1	0	1	0	0	4	2	0	1	2	2	3	0	4	1	0	0	1	0	0	1	2

PCQ VMJYPD LBYK LYSO KBXBJXWXV BXV ZCJPO EYPD
 KBXBJYUXJ LBJOO KCPK. CP LBO LBCMXPV XPV IYJKL PYDBL,
 QBOP KBO BXV OPVOV LBO LXRO CI SX'XJMI, KBO JCKO XPV
 EYKKOV LBO DJCMPV **Therefore, B = h** "DJOXL EYPD, ICJ X
 LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK Y BXNO ZOOP JOACMPLYPD LC UCM
 LBO IXZROK CI FXKL XDOK XPV LBO RODOPVK CI XPAYOPL EYPDK.
 SXU Y SXEO KC ZCRV XK LC AJXNO X IXNCMJ CI UCMJ SXGOKLU?"

OFYRCDMO, LXROK IJCS LBO LBCMXPV XPV CPO PYDBLK

Since O = e, X = a, Y = l, B = h

PCQ VMJiPD LhiK LYSe KhahJawAV haV ZCJPe EiPD
KhahJiUaJ LhJee KCPK. CP Lhe LhCMKaPV aPV IiJKL PiDhL,
QheP Khe haV ePVeV Lhe LaRe CI Sa'aJMI, Khe JCKe aPV
EiKKeV Lhe DJCMPV ZeICJe his, KaUiPD: "DJeaL EiPD, ICJ a
LhCMKaPV aPV CPe PiDhLK i haNe Zeep JeACMPLiPD LC UCM
Lhe IazReK CI FaKL aDeK aPV Lhe ReDePVK CI aPaiePL EiPDK.
SaU i SaEe KC ZCRV aK LC AJaNe a IaNcMJ CI UCMJ SaGeKLU?"

eFIRCDMe, LaReK IJCS Lhe LhCMKaPV aPV CPe PiDhLK

This makes up for over 1/3rd of all characters already!

Since O = e, X = a, Y = l, B = h
Further, look for 'and' and 'the'

PCQ VMJiPD LhiK LiSe KhahJaWaV haV ZCJPe EiPD
KhahJiUaJ LhJee KCPK. CP Lhe LhCMKaPV apV IiJKL PiDhL,
QheP Khe haV ePVeV Lhe LaRe CI Sa'aJMI, Khe JCKe apV
EiKKeV Lhe DJCMPV ZeICJe hiS, KaUiPD: "DJeaL EiPD, ICJ a
LhCMKaPV apV CPe PiDhLK i haNe Zeep JeACMPLiPD LC UCM
Lhe IaZReK CI FaKL aDeK apV Lhe ReDePVK CI aPaiePL EiPDK.
SaU i SaEe KC ZCRV aK LC AJaNe a IaNCMJ CI UCMJ SaGeKLU?"

eFiRCDMe, LaReK IJCS Lhe LhCMKaPV apV CPe PiDhLK

Perhaps, L=t, P=n, V=d

**O = e, X = a, Y = l, B = h,
L=t, P=n, V=d**

nCQ dMJind thiK tiSe KhahJaWad had ZCJne Eind
KhahJiUaJ thJee KCnK. Cn the thCMKand and IiJKt nidht,
Qhen Khe had ended the taRe CI Sa'aJMI, Khe JCKe and
EiKKed the DJCMnd ZeICJe hiS, KaUind: "DJeat Eind, ICJ a
thCMKand and Cne nidhtK i haNe Zeen JeACMntind tC UCM
the IazReK CI FaKt aDeK and the ReDendK CI anAient EindK.
Sau i SaEe KC ZCRd aK tC AJaNe a IaNCMJ CI UCMJ SaGeKtU?"

eFIRCDMe, taReK IJCS the thCMKand and Cne nidhtK

**O = e, X = a, Y = l, B = h,
L=t, P=n, V=d**

nCQ dMJind thiK tiSe KhahJaWad had ZCJne Eind
KhahJiUaJ thJee KCnK. Cn the thCMKand and IiJKt niDht,
Qhen Khe had ended the taRe CI Sa'aJMI, Khe JCKe and
EiKKed the DJCMnd ZeICJe hiS, KaUind: "DJeat Eind, ICJ a
thCMKand and Cne niDhtK i haNe Zeen JeACMntind tC UCM
the IazReK CI FaKt aDeK and the ReDendK CI anAient EindK.
Sau i SaEe KC ZCRd aK tC AJaNe a IaNCMJ CI UCMJ SaGeKtU?"

eFIRCDMe, taReK IJCS the thCMKand and Cne niDhtK

Next, C=o, K=s, l=f

**O = e, X = a, Y = l, B = h,
L=t, P=n, V=d, C=o, K=s, I=f**

noQ dMJind this tiSe shahJaWad had ZoJne Eind
shahJiUaJ thJee sons. on the thomsand and fiJst niDht,
Qhen she had ended the taRe of Sa'aJmf, she Jose and
Eissed the DJoMnd ZefoJe hiS, saUind: "DJeat Eind, foJ a
thoMsand and one niDhts i haNe Zeen JeAoMntind to UoM
the faZRes of Fast aDes and the ReDends of anAient Einds.
SaU i SaEe so Zord as to AJaNe a faNoMJ of UoMJ SaGestu?"

eFiRODMe, taRes fJoS the thomsand and one niDhts

Next, M=u, J=r, D=g, R=l, S=m

Plain Text	a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
Cipher Text	X - - V O I D B Y - - R S P C - - J K L M - - - - -

noQ during this time shahraWad had Zorne Eing
shahriUar three sons. on the thousand and first night,
Qhen she had ended the tale of ma'aruf, she rose and
Eissed the ground Zefore him, saUing: "great Eing, for a
thousand and one nights i haNe Zeen reAounting to Uou
the faZles of Fast ages and the legends of anAient Eings.
maU i maEe so Zold as to AraNe a faNour of UouJ maGestU?

eFilogue, tales from the thousand and one nights

Plain Text	a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
Cipher Text	X - - V O I D B Y - - R S P C - - J K L M - - - - -

Key Phrase: A VOID BY GEORGES PEREC = AVOIDBYGERSPC

noQ during this time shahraWad had Zorne Eing
shahriUar three sons. on the thousand and first night,
Qhen she had ended the tale of ma'aruf, she rose and
Eissed the ground Zefore him, saUing: "great Eing, for a
thousand and one nights i haNe Zeen reAounting to Uou
the faZles of Fast ages and the legends of anAient Eings.
maU i maEe so Zold as to AraNe a faNour of UouJ maGestU?

eFilogue, tales from the thousand and one nights

Plain Text	a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
Cipher Text	X Z A V O I D B Y G E R S P C F H J K L M N Q T U W

Plain Text a b c d e f g h I j k l m n o p q r s t u v w x y z
Cipher Text X Z A V O I D B Y G E R S P C F H J K L M N Q T U W

Key Phrase: A VOID BY GEORGES PEREC = AVOIDBYGERSPC

now during this time shahrazad had borne king
shahriyar three sons. on the thousand and first night,
when she had ended the tale of ma'aruf, she rose and
kissed the ground before him, saying: "great king, for a
thousand and one nights i have been recounting to you
the fables of past ages and the legends of ancient kings.
may i make so bold as to crave a favour of your majesty?"

epilogue, tales from the thousand and one nights

Summary: Secret Codes

- Steganography (hidden)
- Cryptography (scrambled)
 - Transposition
 - Substitution
 - Code (replace words)
 - Cipher (replace letters)
 - Nomenclators (codes+ciphers)

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- Cryptanalysis (codebreaking)
 - Frequency Analysis

Cryptography: Basic Terminology

Sender

Receiver

