

NOT QUITE THE SOLUTION HE EXPECTED
"I could tell by numerous subtle signs" [WIST]

Young children are not purveyors of or dabblers in subtlety.

When it comes to sarcasm specifically, research has shown children begin to detect sarcasm at age six but don't appreciate the humor until age 10.

In that age range - which likely includes the ages of our students below - it's important for adults to be direct rather than try to imply.

Only the most astute child would be able to infer just what it is a veiled response might signify.

*We're reminded of a scene in the Firesign Theater's **The Giant Rat of Sumatra**, in which a young ingénue seeks the help of Hemlock Stones over a secret message. Stones looks at the note and determines:*

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"I could tell by numerous subtle signs" [WIST]

"Hmm, this is a rebus written in a simple head code. Haha, any English schoolboy could catch it. Achoo! (holding nose) Flotsam, pull down the simple English schoolboys decoding manual."

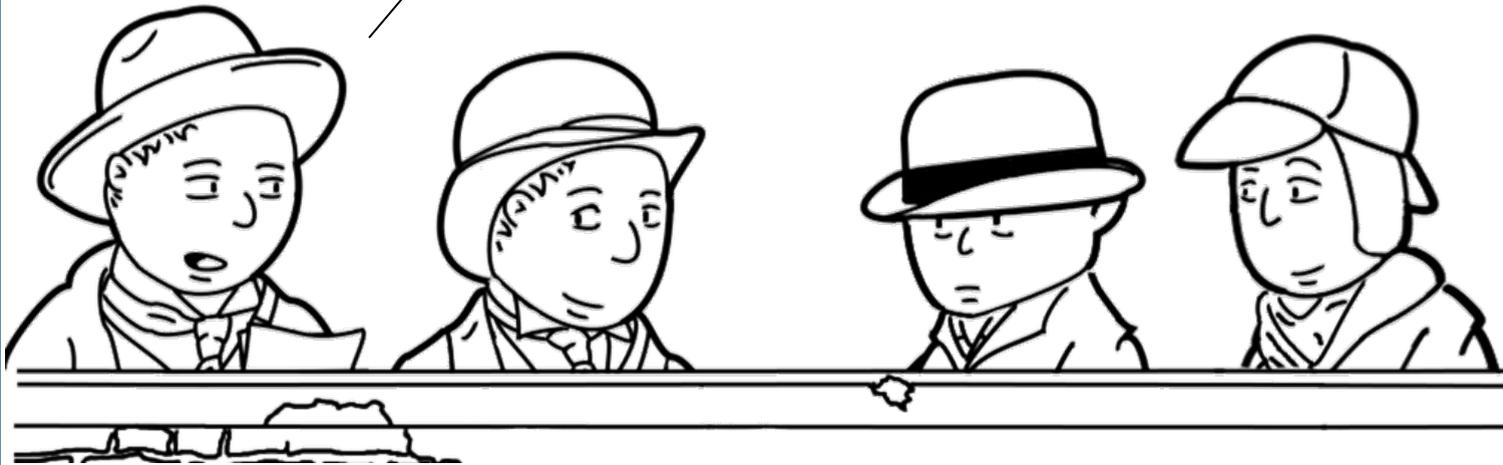
But not every code comes with a manual. While Holmes was able to discern the messages in "The Dancing Men" by understanding the frequency of English letters, there are other notes that required ingenuity.

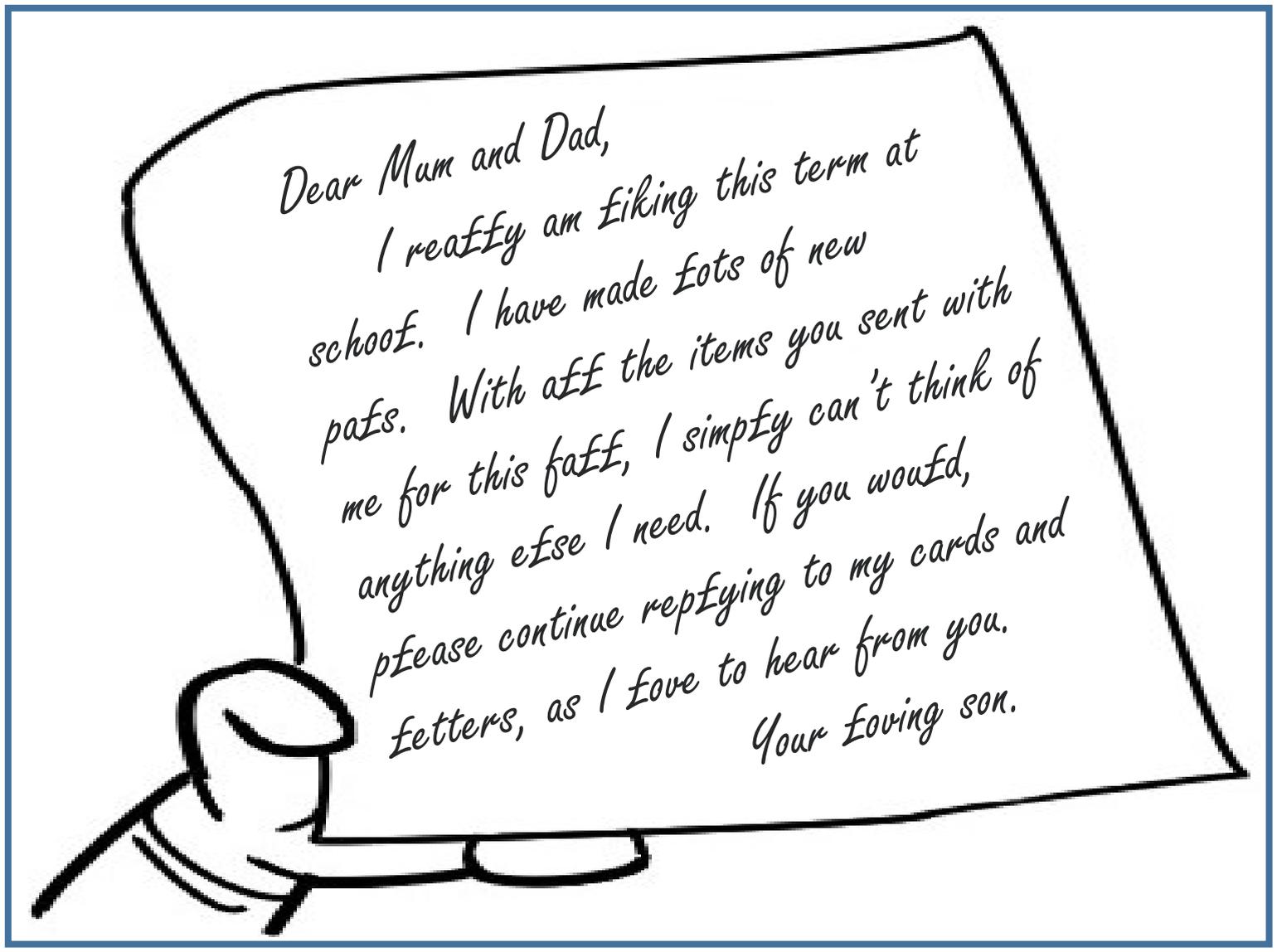
We know Holmes managed to detect a certain cipher in "The Gloria Scott," when a cryptic note disguised its true message in every third word.

*And in **The Valley of Fear**, it was a matter of having a copy of Whitaker's Almanac. But in the case below, perhaps it's simply a matter of knowing one's audience.*

One might even say it's Elementary...

**MY MOTHER AND FATHER HAVE A
VERY INTERESTING SENSE OF
HUMOR... LISTEN TO MY LAST LETTER
TO THEM, AND THEIR REPLY.**



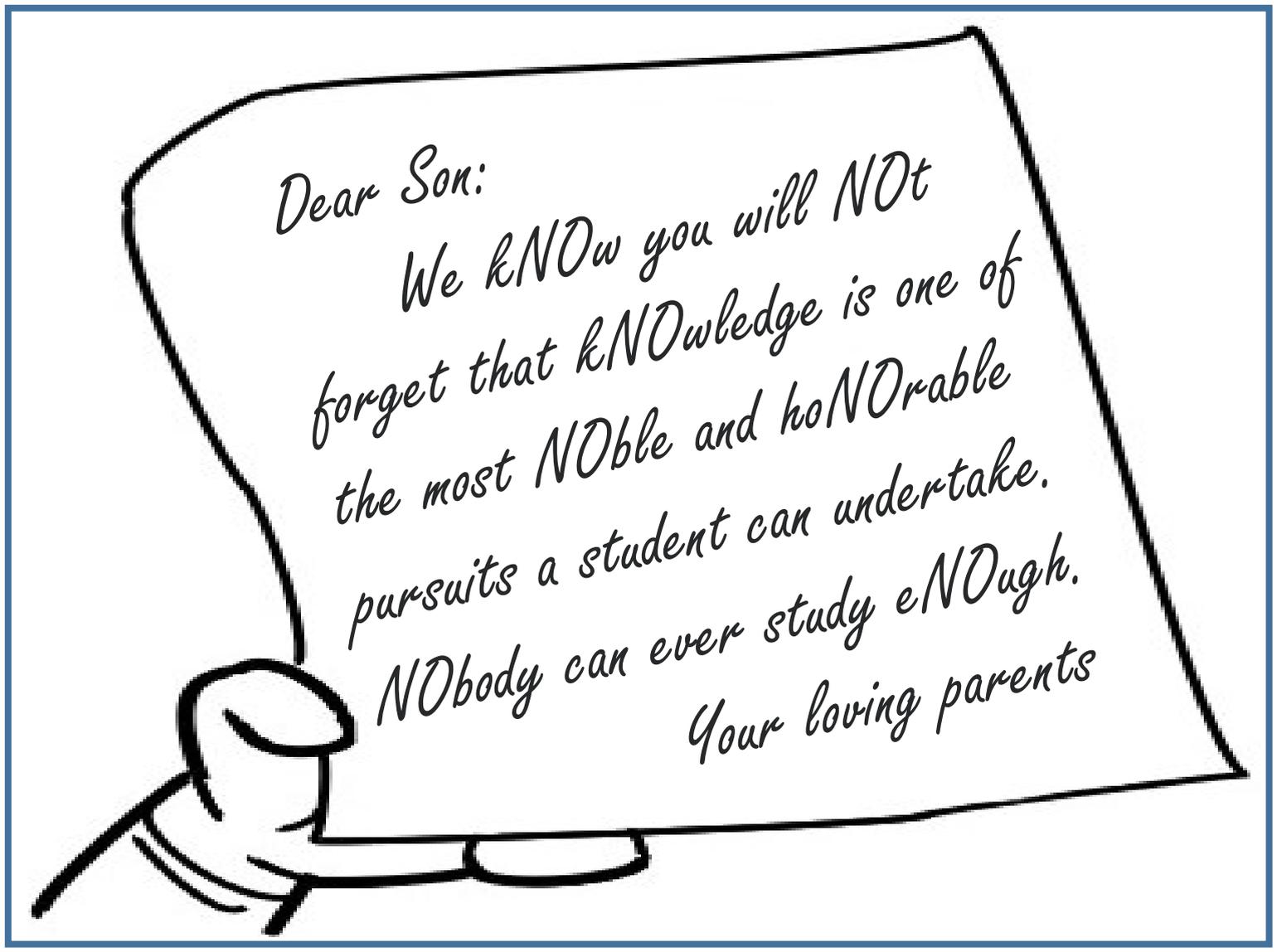


Dear Mum and Dad,

I really am liking this term at school. I have made lots of new

pals. With all the items you sent with me for this half, I simply can't think of anything else I need. If you would, please continue replying to my cards and letters, as I love to hear from you.

Your loving son.

A simple line drawing of a hand holding a scroll. The scroll is rectangular with rounded corners and contains handwritten text. The hand is positioned at the bottom left, with the thumb and index finger gripping the edge of the scroll. The text is written in a cursive, handwritten style.

Dear Son:

We kNOw you will NOt
forget that kNOwledge is one of
the most NOble and hoNOrable
pursuits a student can undertake.
NObody can ever study eNOugh.
Your loving parents