

Bartleby, the scrivener essay examples

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The story of “ Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street” is a playful elaboration of the theme of race, charity and selfishness developed over the elements of legal, ethical and social bindings. The story revolves around the character of Bartleby and his conduct that interweave the proceedings towards a logical illustration of concepts. The plot of the story revolves around the tussle of the two characters (narrator and Bartleby) of the story around the issue of lodging at place instigating interpretations of property rights and the law. The elaboration over the various concepts and their subsequent interpretations are defined by the use of words and Bartleby's language choice and style of delivering the statements. Thus, it can be concluded that the story determines “ The power earned by character to stand for the stance through the choice of language and style”

The impression of the language and style is evidently used as a tool to identify the intensity of deportment and stance of each character. In such a way, it can be added that the story is a beautiful depiction of imagery that allows an individual to attain the power of substance through the conduct and language beyond the grounds of race, affluence and consumerism.

The story of “ Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall Street” begins with the narrator introducing a rather disruptive Bartleby into the static office world at a point where nothing new and interesting is taking place. Bartleby comes out of nowhere, never saying anything about himself to anyone, but at the same time, he copies work voraciously and he can be described as a good scribe. However, three days into his employment, he refuses to proofread some of the documents that he has copied and replies to the narrator, “ I would prefer not to” (21). This phrase turns Bartleby's reply to his employer from an abrupt denial of an order to a polite declination of a request. His use

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of language is rather unique and stands out, introducing choice and difference as key attributes of his character. Bartleby's reply not only shows denial, probably due to temperament, or possible indigestion, but it also implies that things do not always have to be the way they are. Humans have the right to choose whether to do, or not to do, certain things. Basically, it is due to his character and the perception of some things that we can see how Bartleby utilizes his right to occupy office space, challenging the law on property rights. The writer, Herman Melville, clearly separates the gap between Bartleby's opinions on property rights with that of his colleagues, thus giving a broader look on the law. However, beyond the variety of interpretation, the element of status gap is the most obvious constituent that is conceived to subdue an individual to obey the command of boss without a choice. The strategy of Bartleby to handle such conflicts is depicted with the choice of his words, language and style. From the beginning Bartleby is portrayed to use the words 'I will prefer not to'. The words borrowed Bartleby a refuge to abide his consent without falling into the social pressure. Meanwhile, it also communicates the theme of courage and audacity be held through character attributes. Such a subtle and polite denial does not allow the other person to react. In the story, the narrator is described as chaotic after such calm refusal that make him think himself as crazy.

Such a passive communication style is depicted as the genuine trait of Bartleby.

The narrator accommodates Bartleby's passiveness with a space. When the time to move is due, the narrator offers Bartleby some extra money so he

can move out: "'Bartleby,' said I, 'I owe you twelve dollars on account; here are thirty-two; the odd twenty are yours. ---Will you take it?' and I handed the bills towards him. But he made no motion" (143-144). It is after this point that the narrator makes a huge assumption that upon his return the following day, Bartleby would have removed his things from the office, take the money with him and later slip the key under the mat. To the narrator's surprise, he still finds Bartleby in the office the following day and this is where we see the dramatic encounter between the two: "What earthly right have you to stay here? Do you pay any rent? Do you pay my taxes? Or is this property yours?" (160) He [Bartleby] answered nothing (160)."

At this point of the story a different side of the narrator is very evident. He is enraged at this act of rebellion on Bartleby's part. The sympathy he had for Bartleby seems to fade away to some extent because Bartleby is adamant to not quit the job, yet he does not work, and insists that he stays at the office premises. The awkwardness of the situation led the narrator to rethink his perception of Bartleby whom he once referred as 'motionless'. The communication style and word choice of Bartleby compiled the reading that language and character determines the efficacy to confrontation of conflicts. In the same apprehension, the social, ethical and legal implications are pondered with the support of the two different communication style (of Bartleby and the lawyer) to determine the difference of implication. The encounters between the narrator and Bartleby reveal that in as much as the narrator recognizes a person's right to space, property laws are applicable at the end of the day. After a long session of reasoning what he would do with Bartleby, the narrator gives him a second notice to vacate the premises as seen from this encounter; "'I find these chambers too far from the City Hall;

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the air is unwholesome. In a word, I propose to remove my offices next week, and shall no longer require your services. I tell you this now, in order that you may seek another place.' He [Bartleby] made no reply, and nothing more was said. (173-174)"

The variety of words and language used in the office is meant to act as an indicator of man's relationship with the new world of business, finance and property, and Melville has succeeded in the portrayal of this relationship. " I can see that figure now pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn" (11). It is also fair enough to notice that it is not the narrator who pronounces the verdict over Bartleby. This move, therefore shows how Melville wants the reader to consider the views on property rights, giving an allowance for the reader to take sides either following what the law has to offer or challenging part of the law on property rights.

The situation is intensified with the depiction of the new tenants at the narrator's old office, who are irritated by Bartleby's presence either at the building as seen from the encounter with the lawyer and the narrator. This is the point where the determination depicted through language faces the legal consequence. What befalls Bartleby is a result of the strict property rights as he is accused of trespassing and is therefore taken to prison. Bartleby strongly stands his ground when it comes to advocating for his personal right to occupy whichever space. Contrastingly, the narrator still ensures that he makes a follow up on Bartleby despite how Bartleby angers him.

The narrator acts as the mediator between the two extreme worlds of the law and personal freedom. The sensitivity of the narrator over the stance of Bartleby is evident with the display of sympathy, even after the declaration of his open defiance attitude. Moreover, Bartleby strongly expresses his right

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to occupy whatever space, regardless of the laws that have been put in place. The narrator admits in the end that the behavior of Bartleby was primarily an act out of exhaustion that occurred out of his previous occupation in the Dead Letter section of a post office that dug him deep enough in sadness and grief to lose his sense of purpose.

Precisely, we realize that at some point the narrator tried to understand Bartleby and would have understood himself as well. The narrator would have done this if only he would equate human property with a person's capacity to offer 'service'. There is a high probability that Bartleby would have had a better life if the narrator didn't relocate the office. Only the narrator had a comprehensive understanding of exactly who Bartleby was and he seems to resent his move in the end, since Bartleby is no more. On the whole, the two contrasting communication style makes it evident that languages earns power to a character to stand for the stance through the choice of language and style, even though the social, ethical and legal obligations interrupt as final authorities. Herein, Bartleby is the channel that offers a way out of this discourse, but the narrator's failure can be attributed to the direction that the society is taking at the time, where personal relationships are not a hindrance to carrying out business. Work Cited Melville, Herman. *Bartleby, the Scrivener: A Story of Wall-Street*. Bartleby. com. 2013. Web. 6 October 2014