

# Bartleby the scrivener



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Bartleby the Scrivener Part The main character in the story is Bartleby, a scrivener a law copier or clerk working for a Wall Street lawyer in London in 1850. He was hired after answering the ad posted by the lawyer . At the beginning, he is enthusiastic in doing his work but after some time, he rejects the task given to him by politely saying “ I prefer not to”.

Surprisingly, the lawyer finds it hard to dismiss Bartleby since he pity this forlorn-looking man. Later, Bartleby starts living in the office and eats only ginger nut cakes brought to him by an associate. The symbolism of the food had important meaning in the story. Bartleby was not attracted to food, which could symbolize greed. This was subtly shown in the story by the author when he named the two other scrivener after food ( Ginger Nut and Turkey ). I was struck by the details of the scenes and puzzled at first about Bartleby. Later on, I realized that the lawyer who seemed like a decent person also used food to bargain with Bartleby. The lawyer was thinking that for a few morsels of food, he could have a peaceful conscience, thereby revealing the materialistic attitude of the lawyer. As for Bartleby’s attitude to refuse doing his job by politely saying “ I prefer not to” , the issue is not all about laziness or being obstinate. It was Bartleby’s philosophy towards life that forebodes something in his past that could have made him a beaten down man . Maybe the drudgery has gotten to him and broken his spirit causing him to have passive resistance to almost everything in his life. This is what makes the story enigmatic.

Bartleby the Scrivener Part 2

In the second half of the story, the lawyer is trying to remove Bartleby because he feels that Bartleby is negatively affecting his business. He is just sulking in one corner of the office the whole day. Later, the lawyer moved his

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office and the new tenant at the old place kicks Bartleby out. Bartleby just hangs around the hallways of the building like a specter – after all, where would he go? After some time, the lawyer finds out that Bartleby was arrested and jailed for this behavior . Later the lawyer visits him in jail but Bartleby is not interested in his concern. The second time the lawyer visited him, he has died in the yard. He died in jail because he “ would prefer not to” eat. I felt the story had come to a sad conclusion until the lawyer informs us that Bartleby once worked at the Dead letter office. Bartleby found his existence meaningless after coming from there, burning letters sent to dead people. This kind of job makes people depressed since there seems to be no meaning or accomplishment at all.

Frankly, I found the story dark and sad. I was depressed, intrigued and curious about Bartleby. As the story neared the end, there were realizations that helped me understand Bartleby. Bartleby was not just a person , he was a symbol that can be interpreted in many ways. The lawyer was adamant in confronting Bartleby because he was not ready to be exposed to the harsh reality of life – despair, pain, rejection, suffering all represented by Bartleby. The lawyer had a sheltered life that prevented him from going out of his comfort zone. As the lawyer recognized the philosophical meaning of Bartleby’s behavior, he is attracted to his character that is why he offered assistance to Bartleby many times along the story.