

The ways in which
emily and bartleby
have altered the
theme of acceptable
behavio...

[Literature](#)



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Topic: In 2-3 pages, I want you to write about the misfit characters we have encountered in [Bartleby](#), [The Lady with the Pet Dog](#), [A Good Man is Hard to Find](#), [A Rose for Emily](#) and [How to Date A](#). Pick two or three of these stories and explain what these

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1

Many classical novels have themes that involve the disregard of societal norms by a main protagonist. In order for society to progress, the societal norms must constantly be altered along with the public perception of 'normalcy'. In the two stories, Bartleby the Scrivener and A Rose for Emily, there are characters that flout the conformist outlook in order to seek fulfillment. This short essay will take a glance into the ways in which Emily and Bartleby have altered the theme of acceptable behavior in their respective times.

The story A Rose for Emily offers the theme of thwarting traditional society in favor of social change. Falkner is able to convey the struggle of keeping with tradition despite the emergence of nonconformity. Traditions are viewed with reverence through the character of Emily who remains staunchly reactionary despite the constantly changing society around her. As she is completely cut off from the world around her, she creates her own world with carefully delineated perimeters. When she dies, old and young men of all ideas and outlooks come together for her funeral. This is the representation of the Emily's life - a coming together of respected traditions and new philosophical outlooks.

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The story “Bartleby the Scrivener” involves a critical analysis of the social norms and mores of charity. The growing popular obsession with materialistic consumerism. The lawyer who represents the negative aspects of wealth and consumerist thought looks at charity with a focus on the financial costs without gain. His outlook is defined in the following sentiment: “Poor fellow! Thought I, he means no mischief, it is plain he intends no insolence I can get along with him. If I turn him away he will fall in with some less indulgent employer, and then he will be rudely treated here I can cheaply purchase a delicious self-approval. To befriend Bartleby will cost me little or nothing, while I lay up in my soul what will eventually be a sweet morsel for my conscience.” Clearly, the lawyer will only contemplate charity if it comes at very little sacrifice on his part. This represents the selfishness that Melville sees in all who happen to be wealthy.

Bartleby’s refusal to do even the simplest task makes him a burden with absolutely no redemptive function. Even though the lawyer retains Bartleby as an employee and offers to let him stay in his house, the lawyer is still portrayed as selfish because he gains self-satisfaction for his charitable deed.

In both stories, the norms of society are challenged by the main characters. It is essential to the plotlines of many classical novels to have conventional standards challenged by new emerging thought. In both Bartleby the Scrivener and A Rose for Emily this theme is conveyed in very different but pertinent ways.