

Bartleby in herman



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Most individuals assume their positions at work, home or community and accept them to be their assigned roles. These responsibilities become their purpose for living—whether they believe these roles to have been chosen by them or decided for them by God or fate. People work hard in life because they want to do the best out of the roles they believe they are given to fulfill. However, for the character of Bartleby in Herman Melville's short story, nothing in life is worth living for.

In *Bartleby*, the reader sees that people can choose to be free from the conflicts of life by simply giving up everything, and by not allowing oneself to do what society expects them to do. To emphasize this point, the author uses the character of the Lawyer, the narrator of the story, and his conflict with Bartleby. The Lawyer can be seen as a character who both reflects a combination of Bartleby, the person who does not care about everything around him, and the average people who care a lot about what they do and how others regard them.

In the beginning of the story, the Lawyer is introduced to readers by making him describe himself. He is an old man who is proud of the fact that he does not work so hard like others: " I am...filled with a profound conviction that the easiest way of life is the best...I am one of those unambitious lawyers who never addresses a jury, or in any way draws down public applause; but in the cool tranquility of a snug retreat, do a snug business among rich men's bonds and mortgages and title-deeds. " He calls himself a " safe" man.

He avoids conflict and confrontations, is seldom angry and his biggest complaint in life is to work in an office with a bad window view. He hires Bartleby into his office because he likes the quietness of the man. Like him,

Bartleby looks like a man who also has no big ambitions in life. Furthermore, when the Lawyer learns that Bartleby has made the office his home, he feels for the man and sympathizes with his loneliness: " Before, I had never experienced aught but a not displeasing sadness. The bond of a common humanity now drew me irresistibly to gloom.

A fraternal melancholy! For both I and Bartleby were sons of Adam. " Their difference appears, however, when Bartleby begins to act strangely and when this strangeness worsens through the passing months. One day, when the Lawyer asks him to do something, Bartleby answers, " I would prefer not to. " At another time, when the Lawyer asks him to " comply with...a request made according to common usage and common sense", Bartleby gives the same answer. Then, Bartleby not only refuses to do little errands for the Lawyer, he refuses to work altogether.

And when the Lawyer asks him to leave the office since he declares he is tired of his work as a scrivener, he refuses. The Lawyer is forced to move because he could not make the other man leave and the other lawyers who visit his office starts talking about the strange Bartleby. However, Bartleby's presence gives the next tenant the same trouble. The Lawyer then decides to talk to him about what he wants but Bartleby replies that he would simply " like to be stationary. " He does not even accept the Lawyer's invitation to just live in his house.

Finally, the new tenant calls the police and they bring Bartleby to jail where he eventually dies. Bartleby's conflict with the Lawyer shows the reader how strange Bartleby is if one uses the normal rules that people live by as criteria for determining whether an action is normal or not. His non-reaction is a

show of rebellion at social rules like the need to be friendly to one's fellows, the need to work even if one does not want to in order to survive, the rule to live only in the house that one owns, and to follow orders from one's boss. Bartleby is a man who has given up on all of these.

One could say that he has completely given up on life. The Lawyer could not leave Bartleby alone because a part of him could understand Bartleby. He lacks ambition and he "wants the easiest way of life." These aspects of his personality could be seen to be just like the life that Bartleby chooses. And so, the Lawyer tries his best to find a way to make Bartleby accept his offers of a normal life, even an easy life where Bartleby would be allowed to do nothing only that he would live in the Lawyer's home. But Bartleby keeps his decision to stay in the building.

In the end, however, the Lawyer himself gives up on Bartleby. He cannot totally leave behind his old life and give everything up like Bartleby does. Unlike Bartleby, he is still controlled by the need to be accepted by his fellow lawyers and be considered normal by other people. Allowing Bartleby to remain in his office would make the Lawyer look as strange as the other man. When he chose to resist following the rules of normal living, Bartleby chooses to die even as he still breathes and eats. By leaving Bartleby, the Lawyer chooses to live.