

BARTLEBY THE FAILURE AS A REPRESENTATION OF MELVILLE'S LIFE

Bartleby, the Failure It is not rare, sometimes it is even common, that an author speaks about his or her self in their works. Herman Melville's "Bartleby, the

Perfect for students who have to write Melville Stories essays. In fact, he often moves himself nearly to tears by the stories he builds by way of circumstantial evidence that, like a detective or perplexed medical practitioner, he pieces together in a nigh-obsessive effort to determine the cause of Bartleby's deviant behavior. The walls which surround him give him a sense of place if not identity, and there is a certain security in this. The narrator tries multiple tactics to get Bartleby to conform to the standards of the workplace, and ultimately realizes that Bartleby's mental state is not that of normal society. The nature of the resistance, however, is paradoxical and tragic. Such categories, the text suggests, preclude full experience of the rich diversity of the human condition. The description of Bartleby as "an irreparable loss to literature" appears in only the seventh sentence of the story 4. When the nameless narrator of "Bartleby, The Scrivener" is first introduced to the eponymous copyist, he makes immediate note of the young man's "pallidly neat, pitiably respectable, incurably forlorn" aspect 9. To be sure, it is an ambivalent identification, but that only makes it all the more powerful". This screen renders Bartleby "entirely isolate[d] from" the narrator's "sight, though not fromâ€¦[his] voice" Questions such as this are inevitably preceded by assumptions of or questions about the cause of Bartleby's deviance. Themes[edit] Bartleby the Scrivener explores the theme of isolation in American life and the workplace through actual physical and mental loneliness. Plot[edit] The narrator is an elderly, unnamed Manhattan lawyer with a comfortable business in legal documents. This description is one of the few instances in which Melville describes a reactionary state in Bartleby. At each occurrence, there is a stupor surrounding Bartleby, as if one had heard the Unspeakable or the Unstoppable. Unspecific in what it refers to, the word alludes to a choice which it denies. The implicit suggestion that there might be something Bartleby would prefer to do is an illusion. He refuses, in effect, to be fed, except insofar as he feeds on himself. These persistent refusals to respond to the narrator are often more telling than Bartleby's ambiguous preferences. Arthur is also bewildered by other actions of the Bartledans, but "He preferred not to think about it". ISBN Bartleby, of course, prefers not to, although it is notable that at the conclusion of their conversation, Bartleby's mouth evinces the "faintest conceivable tremor" Later the narrator returns to find that Bartleby has been forcibly removed and imprisoned in the Tombs. Bartleby's former job was at the "Dead Letter Office" that received mail with nowhere to go, representing the isolation of communication that Bartleby had at both places of work, being that he was given a separate work area for himself at the lawyer's office. Instead of embracing Bartleby's difference or attempting to understand Bartleby on his own terms, the narrator obsessively seeks explanations for Bartleby's behavior, using amalgamations of bits of laboriously discovered biographical data. True understanding of subjective human experience and difference comes not from quests for data and forensic evidence, but rather from an acceptance of diversity. But as it was I should have as soon thought of turning my pale plaster-of-Paris bust of Cicero out of doors. True to form, throughout the story, Bartleby is for the narrator "the object of study" that Linton notesâ€¦"an object for which the narrator's gaze is legitimized by a medical understanding of difference as that which much be classified, categorized, treated, cured, and thereby, above all, controlled. Smith and Michael A. In one conversation, during which the narrator unsuccessfully attempts to discern the cause of Bartleby's difference by means of biographical data, he begins by calling Bartleby forth from the screen which he has erected in his office. Haberstroh, Charles J. One of the narrator's other employees, affectionately nicknamed Turkey by his co-workers, routinely exhibits a flushed countenance which "blaze[s] like a grate full of Christmas coals" each day after lunch, after which point the lawyer finds his "business capacitiesâ€¦seriously disturbed for the remainder" of the work day 5. In fact, though his famous preferences are uttered twenty-four times in the novel, twelve times Bartleby simply remains silent, provisioning no response to the narrator's demands and questions. Thus, Bartleby may represent Melville's frustration with his own situation as a writer, and the story itself is "about a writer who forsakes conventional modes because of an irresistible preoccupation with the most baffling philosophical questions". In , when the psycho-critics were refining their notions of doppelgangers and split selves, Marvin Felheim, in an article in College English, tried to categorise the various treatments of the story.