



# **Bartleby, the Scrivener: a Story of Wall-Street (Classics You Should Know) (Volume 15)**

*Herman Melville*

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## Ever Felt Alone, Surrounded by People...?

*Bartleby the Scrivener* explores the theme of isolation in American life and the workplace through actual physical loneliness and mental loneliness. Although all of the characters at the office are related by being co-workers, Bartleby is the only one whose name is known to us and seems serious, as the rest of characters have odd nicknames, such as "Nippers" or "Turkey." This excludes him from being normal in the workplace.

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.

Bartleby begins to never leave the office, but repeats what he does all day long, copying, staring, and repeating his famous words of "I would prefer not to," leading readers to have another image of the repetition that leads to isolation on Wall Street and the American workplace.

**Review:** "Herman Melville is one of American literature's greatest figures." --The Cambridge Guide to Literature in English

**About the Author:** Herman Melville was an American novelist, poet, and lecturer best known for his classic novel *Moby-Dick*, as well as for his short fiction "Bartleby, the Scrivener," and the unfinished "Billy Budd, Sailor." Educated as a teacher and later as an engineer, Melville's writing was heavily influenced by his time aboard the whaling ship *Acushnet*, and his month-long captivity by Typee natives on Nuka Hiva island.

Although Melville experienced success early in his writing career, public indifference to his masterpiece, *Moby-Dick*, resulted in waning attention, and his work was almost entirely disregarded by the time of his death in 1891.

Melville's work experienced a revival in the early twentieth century, and he is now considered one of the pre-eminent American writers of his time. He is also one of the most-studied novelists, and was the first writer to be collected and published by the Library of America.

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#### **Nicole Powell:**

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