



NSDAR Educational Resources Committee

"Bartleby the Scrivener - An American Short Story"

Lesson Plan

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Grade Level: 12th Grade

1. Identify the standards to be addressed:

11-12.L.VAU.4 Determine or clarify the meaning of unknown and multiple-meaning words and phrases based on 11th-12th grade-level text by choosing flexibly from a range of strategies c. Consult reference materials, both print and digital, to find the pronunciation of a word or phrase.

11-12.RL.KID.3 Analyze how an author's choices regarding the development and interaction of characters, events, and ideas over the course of a text impact meaning.

2. Statement of the objective and lesson outcomes:

By the end of the lesson, students will be able to analyze how the use of characterization can create meaning in a narrative work. Students will be able to determine a theme of the narrative and to discuss the relevance of the theme in today's society

3. Materials, resources, and technology to be used by teacher/students:

Students will need a copy of the short story: "Bartleby the Scrivener A Story of Wallstreet" by Herman Melville as well as the questions and chart described in the lesson

The teacher will need a projector and a computer to show a short video from Youtube

4. Introduction of the topic:

Students will watch a very short video on the history of Wall Street: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fOPw0x0yGJc> Then you will introduce the author of the short story: Herman Melville and provide examples of his titles that students will be aware of. Students will be given a list of pertinent vocabulary words to define before reading.

Vocabulary List:

paroxysms	recondite	sedate	suffrage	chimera
Custom House	scrivener	sanguine	hermitage	succor
conveyancer	pallid	moonstruck	dissipation	pursy
florid	hue	sallow	blotting paper	

5. Procedure for instruction:

Students will read "Bartleby the Scrivener" independently and answer close reading questions. As students read, they will identify the previously provided vocabulary words as they are used in context by providing the phrase in which the word is used placing it with the definition. After reading students will complete a chart that provides them the opportunity to identify the characterization used to describe each character in the short story.

Characterization chart elements: 6 rows and 5 columns Column Headers will be as follows:

Name of the character	Source of the name (if provided)	physical description of the character		
Description of the character's behavior		Description of what the character evoked from the other characters		

Close Reading Questions:

1. What is the narrator's role in the story?
2. What made Bartleby an attractive employee to the narrator?

3. How did Bartleby perform his job? What was the problem with his performance?
4. Why did Bartleby's boss want to fire him? Why didn't the boss fire him?
5. What peculiar behaviors did Bartleby exhibit?
6. What aggravated Bartleby's boss about Bartleby's behavior?
7. What is Turkey's plan to deal with Bartleby? Who stops Turkey? Why?
8. What is Nipper's plan to deal with Bartleby? Why is this ironic?
9. What is Bartleby's response to every request his boss makes?
10. Why did the boss grow fond of Bartleby despite his strange behavior?
11. What surprised the narrator when he went by his office on a Sunday?
12. What does the narrator discover as a result of his trip by his office on a Sunday?
13. What does the boss realize about Bartleby's mental state?
14. What was the boss's conclusion about Bartleby after going through Bartleby's desk?
15. How did the boss decide to help Bartleby?
16. How does Turkey suggest they should help Bartleby?
17. What word do the others in the office start using?
18. What does the boss think caused Bartleby to quit copying documents?
19. What happens when the narrator tells Bartleby he has to leave since he refuses to work anymore?
20. How does the narrator finally rid himself of Bartleby? Why does he take this course of action when he still feels some responsibility for Bartleby?
21. How does Bartleby react to the narrator's decision?
22. Why do people come to the narrator to complain about Bartleby? What concern causes the narrator to talk to Bartleby? What generous offer does the narrator make to Bartleby? Why do you think he makes this offer?
23. How does the buildings landlord solve the problem of Bartleby?
24. What further kindnesses does the narrator show Bartleby?
25. Why does the story end as it does?
26. Which character do you sympathize most with? Why?
27. Why do you think Bartleby behaves as he does?

6. **Lesson closure:**

Students will meet in small groups of 3 to 4 students to discuss why the narrator provided such detailed descriptions of each character and how the descriptions helped to enhance the characterization the narrator and Bartleby. Students will also discuss their perception of Bartleby and the narrator and how they feel the narrator should have solved the conflict with Bartleby. Each group will determine a possible theme of the story and locate a quote that supports the theme. The lesson will end when each group shares the theme the groups identified and the class as a whole discusses the themes and the pertinence of the quotes selected as evidence.

7. **Assessment of student understanding:**

Students will write a short essay using this modified prompt from the 1976 Advanced Placement Literature and Composition exam: The conflict created when the will of an individual opposes the will of the majority is the recurring theme of many novels, plays, and essays. From a work of recognized literary merit ("Bartleby the Scrivener"), select a fictional character who is in opposition to his or her society. In a critical essay, analyze the conflict and discuss the moral and ethical implications for both the individual and the society. Do not summarize the plot or action of the work you choose