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Course Title

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Describe the Physical Characteristics of Bartleby and how They Highlight His Last Portrait

Melville's story depicts Bartleby as a mysterious man whose weird behaviors around the office leave his fellow scribes in confusion. Melville introduces Bartleby to the readers as a pallid personality who responds positively to the lawyer's employment position. The initial description of Bartleby as a scrivener is positive because of his hardworking attitude and the excellent performances he displays in the office. However, a conspicuous character feature about Bartleby is his isolation from the social world. Consequently, Melville describes Bartleby's physical attributes that lead to his final portrait (death) as motionless, pallid, elusive, and incurably forlorn.

The prime explanation of Bartleby's last portrait is his motionless characteristic. He begins showing no interest in his job. The symptoms are too much that the lawyer describes him using lifeless terminologies. The lawyer tells the readers that Bartleby is behaving silently, mechanically, and palely. Regardless of his deadly natural state, Bartleby says that he is aware of his background. The lawyer finds out that Bartleby is from the Dead Letter Office, which signifies a dark past. He attempts to reconcile his past, but the office walls trap Bartleby and sees the motionless character drive him to the tombs.

The pallid characteristic also helps highlight his last portrait. A lawyer's use of the term pallid to describe Bartleby shows that he is never alive during his entire office tenure. From the

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offset, Bartleby does not perform his copyist duties. Bartleby's relation to his past of the Dead Letter Office shows his hopeless mind. His hopeless and incompetent mind does not want to face realities anymore. The lawyer employs Bartleby as a law copyist, but instead the character faces dead walls in the office depicting him as a corpse.

The lawyer describes Bartleby as an elusive character because of the mysterious manner in which he lives and views life. The mysterious character of Bartleby reveals that he cannot live in a world demanding for conformity. The fact that he cannot conform to the world is a clear revelation to his forthcoming death by the end of the short story. The character believes in existentialism hence does not view any worth in the natural world. It is no wonder that Bartleby and his employer do not agree on virtually everything in the office. The total despair indicated in Bartleby's life explains why he ends up dead in the tombs.

The final physical characteristic that foreshadows Bartleby's last portrait is the fact that he is incurably forlorn. The lawyer says that Bartleby has no social life at all. He has isolated himself from the society. A passion for life is not present in Bartleby. As the story advances, Bartleby finds nothing unusual at all. The job that he once loved is never enjoyable to the extent that he responds to his employers demands by saying that he prefers not to do the command. The confines of the office wall are the only protection that Bartleby has formed against the social life. Once outside the office, he only has either to conform to the world or to die. Consequentially, Bartleby finally ends up in the tombs.

In summation, Melville offers several physical descriptions about Bartleby that predict his last portrait. The characteristics of motionless, pallid, elusive, and incurably forlorn account for his death at the end of the short story.