

# Bartleby the Scrivener Study Guide - Chapter Two

1. The narrator is a character in his own right; in fact, this story tells as much about him as it does about Bartleby. What do we learn about him in the first few paragraphs? What does his language (including the use of terms like "imprimis," a legal term meaning "first," and constructions like "not insensible" and "hath") tell us about him? Are there any contradictions involved in being an "unambitious lawyer" who admires John Jacob Astor?
2. Before introducing Bartleby, the narrator introduces us to three other workers: Turkey, Nippers, and Ginger Nut. What are they like? Why does the narrator introduce them first? How does the narrator's response to them (and his tolerance of their faults) shape the reader's reactions to what follows?
3. What part do the setting and the subtitle ("A Story of Wall Street") play in the story? Why does the narrator so frequently mention walls, screens, windows, and views? Why does Bartleby stare out the window or lurk behind a screen? In what ways does the narrator's characterization of him as a "fixture," a "pillar of salt," or "the last column of a ruined temple" help the reader to see him as a structural object—a piece of furniture or of architecture—rather than as a human being?
4. What kind of person is Bartleby? Why might he say "I would prefer not to" instead of "I will not"? What kinds of appeals does the narrator make to Bartleby, and how does Bartleby deflect them?