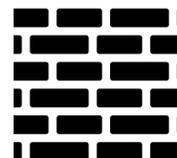


Symbols **Sample Answers** Evidence and Analysis

Directions: Describe or use a quote to identify three instances in which each symbol appears in *Bartleby, the Scrivener*, and write a short paragraph describing the context and significance of that appearance. Then write a longer paragraph analyzing the broader meaning of the symbol in *Bartleby, the Scrivener*.



Walls

| Quote or Description | Context and Significance |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |

Meaning of the Symbol

Walls serve to create boundaries, and they disconnect people throughout the narrative of *Bartleby, the Scrivener*. **The Lawyer's** office is separated into two rooms by a ground-glass folding door: one room where The Lawyer works and one in which his scriveners work. When **Bartleby** is hired, The Lawyer places him inside his own office, but he installs a "folding screen" (basically a temporary wall) so that The Lawyer cannot see Bartleby and Bartleby cannot see him. Not only that, but the spot where The Lawyer stations Bartleby has a window that *used* to look out onto back yards, but now, because of the construction of new buildings, the window only looks out onto a brick wall.

Beyond the office's layout, the very name of the street on which the office is located, Wall Street, symbolizes the disconnected isolation within. The office's address is never actually written out in the story; instead it is always written in the format "No. - Wall Street." By keeping the office address vague, the office itself comes to stand in for all of Wall Street, implying that the disconnection apparent in The Lawyer's office is in fact

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____

characteristic of the entirety of New York's business sector.

By the story's end, walls take on an even more menacing quality, as when Bartleby is shipped off to prison, he is held not in a cell, but in the courtyard in the prison's very center, surrounded by walls of extreme thickness. Although he is alone in this huge yard, which would itself serve as a symbol of disconnected isolation, The Lawyer notes (when he visits Bartleby) that he can see the eyes of all the thieves and murderers who are locked away in their cells peering down on Bartleby. So, although Bartleby can see other human beings and they can see him through the cracks in the walls, the walls themselves serve to disconnect and isolate these felons from each other, much how the walls in The Lawyer's office separated Bartleby from the other employees and The Lawyer himself. The walls, then, come to symbolize not just the disconnection on Wall Street, but the disconnection that is a part of human life.

Name: _____ Date: _____ Period: _____



Dead Letters

| Quote or Description | Context and Significance |
|----------------------|--------------------------|
| 1. | |
| 2. | |
| 3. | |

Meaning of the Symbol

At the story's end, **The Lawyer** informs the reader that he has heard rumors that **Bartleby** worked for many years at the Dead Letter Office. Dead Letters - letters which for some reason or other can not be delivered to their intended destination- are a form of failed communication, of someone trying to reach out and connect to another person through language and failing to find that connection. In that way, Dead Letters serve as a symbol for disconnection, and for the failure of language to properly communicate.

Although Dead Letters never appear as a part of Bartleby's arc in the story, their inclusion at the end of the story serves to possibly illuminate Bartleby's initial motivation to passively resist any part of his job other than writing—after years of destroying communication and language, perhaps he craved to partake in the creation of language. Why he shuts down further and eventually refuses to write is open to interpretation, but it is possible it has something to do with his former job at the Dead Letter Office—perhaps Bartleby felt no more satisfaction (and no more connection) at the creation of language than he did in its destruction.