

Nickel and dimed

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Nickel and Dimed is a book written by Barbara Ehrenreich. Ehrenreich traveled across the country, undercover, from Florida to Maine, and then to Minnesota. She took the cheapest living spaces available and accepting jobs such as; a waitress, hotel maid, house cleaner, nursing-home aide, and Wal-Mart salesperson. Ehrenreich, a Ph. D, educated journalist, found that manual labor taxing, required incredible stamina, quick thinking, fast learning, focus, and memory.

Constant and repeated movement creates a risk of repetitive stress injury. Pain must be often worked through to hold a job in a market, and days are filled with laborious, and backbreaking jobs. Ehrenreich's argument in Nickel and Dimed is to prove it would be virtually impossible for a single mother and her children to survive on a low-wage salary without any help or financial aide. “ What you don't necessarily realize when you start selling your time by the hour is that what you're selling is your life.” (187)

What Ehrenreich is trying to argue here is, that the more one works on a job that is degrading and uninteresting to him/her, the more he/she will be “ selling their life” to that job. Millions of Americans work for poverty-level wages, and one day Ehrenreich decided to join them. She was inspired in part by the welfare reform, which guaranteed that any job equals a better life. But how can anyone survive, let alone prosper, on \$6 to \$7 an hour? (Barnes and Noble)

As the reader of the book, I qualify with some of the ideas Ehrenreich has written in the book. Just because one may have a high level of learning, does not mean that in the future that, that person will end up having a good career and job. What Ehrenreich has written to the reader is true in most

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cases, if the person can withhold a low-wage job for long enough, with a low-wage salary in order to keep him/her and their family out of poverty. Ehrenreich used many techniques to make her argument.

She used; a good theme, a sense of stereotype, and irony many times throughout the book. A running theme throughout Ehrenreich's book is that most “ unskilled jobs” actually demand a high level of certain skills and physical stamina. Through the whole book she makes her point with this theme. She traveled from state to state in order to prove to society that most unskilled jobs really do require a lot of mentality and fast learning. “ I’ve noticed that all my co-workers are poor in all the hard-to-miss, stereotypical ways.

Crooked yellow teeth...pins. ” (174) What she is saying is that when you think of a poor person, you'd think of the yellow-teethed, raggedy clothed peasant with dirt smeared all over their face. This is a stereotype of course, so she was understandably surprised that this was basically the case all around her. Lastly, the author uses a sense of irony, she considers herself “ overqualified” and “ too-educated” to be a low wage worker and with those thoughts she went undercover and worked low wage jobs and earned a minimum of six to seven dollars.

With all of these techniques she used it helped for a better understanding of her point. This book makes you think about others, and how they are surviving on a minimum wage, labor job. People with decent jobs and well pay may not worry about the welfare of others, but this book makes a good point, Ehrenreich herself goes on an undercover “ mission” to see if a woman can survive on two jobs with minimum wage. She was surprised that these

low-wage jobs require a lot more than they seem. They require a lot of mental skills, and stamina.