

Nickel and dimed essay sample



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

Introduction

In the beginning of *Nickle and Dimed*, the main character and author, Barbara Ehrenreich establishes regulations and limits on how close she is actually willing to get to poverty. Her first rule is she could not (in her job hunt) “fall back on any skills derived from any education or usual work (Pg 4).” Rule number two is that she must accept the highest paying job that is offered to her, and she must work as hard as she can to keep that job. Her final rule, rule number three, Barbara must take the lowest priced housings she can find that provides sufficient privacy and safety. By the end of this story however at one point, all these rules were broken.

To limit herself on how close she is actually getting to real poverty for her experiment, she also sets some boundaries. The first boundary is that she will always have a car (Pg 5). She will never allow herself to become homeless, and she will never go hungry. These boundaries aren't realistic because obviously people go hungry every day. Some people, go through a part in their life where they don't have a house to live in, therefore they are homeless. These are the harsh realities of life that thousands of people have to face every day.

Guidelines I would establish for myself would be that I am never going to go hungry. I always get a car, and my final boundary would be that I have an emergency credit card. . However, I understand why she did establish these rules and it is understandable that she would not want to actually put herself into real life poverty. If you are blessed enough to have a comfortable, and/or suitable living environment, why completely jeopardize everything for

an experiment, when you can get the same numbers while not having to undergo the personal hardships?

Chapter 1: Serving In Florida

While I have never had a job and chapter one was about her working in the Key West, I can still relate to this chapter. In this chapter, Barbara acquires three jobs; a waitressing job at Jerry's, another waitressing job at the Hearthside, and a housekeeping job inside the hotel attached to Jerry's. How I could relate to this chapter, was through my school work. Barbara works an eight hour shift, from two p. m. to ten p. m., for two dollars and forty-three cents an hour at the Hearthside. Barbara learns that management does not want to see any of the employees sitting still. She must keep herself busy with a multitude of restocking and cleaning tasks as to not anger Stu. " When, on a particularly dead afternoon, Stu finds me glancing at a USA Today a customer has left behind, he assigns me to vacuum the entire floor with the broken vacuum cleaner, which has a handle only two feet long, and the only way to do that without incurring orthopedic damage is to proceed from spot to spot on your knees (Pg 23)" is a quote from Nickel and Dimed which shows how waitressing is much more than just waiting on the customer.

Housecleaning is grueling work that requirements the worker to have more than the normal amount of ' elbow grease' as they clean. These jobs are not only mental strains, but also constantly forces you to move quickly and perform tasks that will wear your body down. Barbara went from her first shift, straight to her next shift, with just enough time in between to change

uniforms. Overtime, this broke her down and she just was unable to wear the workload in the end.

During my sophomore year, I was assigned the infamous, Immigration project. My US History teacher and my English teacher collaborated, to assign a two part assignment. We needed to make a scrapbook that met the qualifications on the photos and write an eight page paper. The Immigration project had many deadlines within the main task, to assure that we were staying on task, but each mini deadline was a grade itself which created more stress for me because I could not move at my own pace. While I was working on this major project, I also had basketball practice for two hours a day, every day except Sunday, not counting the numerous amount of scheduled games and weekend tournaments.

My daily routine during this time was go to school for seven hours a day, then straight to basketball practice, and when I finally got home and cleaned up I worked on my project and all my other homework subjects. Eventually, the long homework nights and the long school days would leave me drained. I would start to slow down with working on my project. This only added onto my stress level, because I would think that I wasn't going to finish my project on time do to my decrease in working on it.

Chapter 2: Scrubbing in Maine

There are times in your life when telling the truth is not in anyone's best interest. In our personal lives, our own views might conflict with a close friend's insecurity. If my friend were to ask my opinion on their new hairstyle, and I knew that they were excited about it, and loved it, I would tell them it

looks great, even if I thought it was ugly. This would be a case where supplying an answer of what the other person wants to hear, would be better for both parties, rather than if you told the truth.

In our working lives, people don't always tell the truth either, which isn't necessarily a bad thing. Barbara had to fill out a survey in this chapter, in which she answered the questions with the 'right' responses, rather than honest ones. People need incomes to provide for themselves and for their family. Living in this world is not possible without money, therefore you must have a job. Most people's lying in the work area would be on their resume. This is not the worst thing in the world, and if it is what you have to do to get a job, then that's what you must do. There are thousands of people who are either jobless, homeless, hungry, or all of the above. It's necessary to have a job if you want to independently survive in this world.

Moreover, I believe that you should always try to tell the truth. In only special cases like those I provided, lying would not get you into a negative situation. The truth should be the first option, but people should use judgment with what they say. There is already so much pain in the world, why be the cause of more suffering when you can uplift someone instead of tearing them down?

Chapter 3: Selling in Minnesota

When a person is under a large amount of stress, it can affect their attitude towards others and their general outlook. People tend to take out their anger and emotions on other people, who have little to do with why they are actually feeling that way. School can be a lot of work, and there

have been times when I took my anger and stress out on people close to me, who were undeserving of it. Barbara starts off the day well rested and as the model employee, but as the day goes on her yearning to complete the day affects her attitude towards customers. She's overly helpful and cheery, but brings it full circle by the end of the day by becoming gloomy and sassy.

My situation relates to the stress of school. I had studied all night for my physics test, and I gave all my effort into preparing for this test. After staying up late into the night, memorizing my flashcards and studying our labs, I went into school and took the test. I worked my hardest for this test, and received a D-, which lowered my overall grade. I was so distraught, I and felt so defeated and let down. When I found out my grade, I was at home. I ignored my parents when they spoke and was very complacent with conversations. I was mad at everyone and spoke sarcastically to all. My dad wasn't putting up with my attitude and so I was grounded that night as well. I resolved this situation by apologizing and explaining about my poor physics grade. We talked and hugged it out, and then all was well in the Wenzel household.

Comparing Barbara's change from "aggressive hospitality" to "aggressive hostility" when she worked at Wal-Mart to my own change, I would say they are very similar. Our true feelings shown through by our facial emotions. Although barely any words were spoken by either of us, the aura of "don't-even-look-at-me" was sent out to her customers and to my dad.

Evaluation

Due to recent economic downturns, the price of gas shot up dramatically.

Gas is a product people need for their cars so they can get from place to place. Students are especially effected by this increase, how will a low income student be able to afford these new costs? Tell them to just take the bus? Well, gas also fuels public transportation. With higher prices to fill the gas tank, public transportation will have to start charging more in order to make a profit. Students who live in big cities, are most affected by this directly. However, the average student still takes a toll. School buses will start raising their prices for the school to hire them, which will be made up by raising the tuition to enter school.

With high gas prices, car trips will become limited. Extra travels will be erased and banned in order to keep the gas tank full, for as long as possible. Some students, who live independently, would most likely decide that driving to work is more important than driving to school every day. The student's education would get cut out due to the economic problems of which increased the gas prices.

Another aspect that hurts students, is the increased food costs in both restaurants and grocery stores. This economic downturn has forced prices to rise by three percent in both of these aspects in the course of a year. This affects students because if their families are struggling to provide, then these price increases will force the family to cut out from buying necessary food. Students need breakfast to do well in school; it provides them with the needed energy to carry out the day. Also, hot lunch might not be provided or is unattainable to the student, therefor they must pack their own lunch. This could be a problem if the student's family doesn't have food at home because of such high prices at the grocery store.

Works Cited

Ehrenreich, Barbara. Nickel and Dimed. N. p.: Henry Holt, 2001. Print. " How Gas Prices Get High." About. N. p., n. d. Web. 16 Nov. 2014. " USDA ERS - Food Price Outlook: Summary Findings." USDA ERS - Food Price Outlook: Summary Findings. N. p., n. d. Web. 18 Nov. 2014.