

# Real work

[Linguistics](#), [English](#)



Real Work In the chapter Los Pobres from the Mexican-American Richard Rorigues' autobiography *Hunger for Memory: The Education of RichardRodrigues*, 1982, the author reflects on his summer job near the end of his senior year at Stanford. The job for a duration of three months included heavy manual labor and menial work such as shoveling, raking, and sweeping. Rodrigues' purpose in taking up the work for the three months of summer, was to earn some money that he required, since the pay was good; and he was to join graduate school the same year, at the end of summer. The ' simple insight' that Rodrigues has during his experience of working as a manual laborer is that he would not learn in three months what his father had meant by ' real work'. He realized that his keenness to experience the sensations from the regular motion of shoveling, even when he was doing it for several hours at a stretch, was because he knew that this experience was only a temporary one for him. Rodrigues' sweating chest and painful shoulder did not lessen his enjoyment of the work; and he was unwilling to learn from an older colleague who wished to show him a different manner of shoveling, to avoid making his back work too much. He realized that because he was not bound to the job, the sensations of exertion and fatigue were something to be savored, according to him. On the other hand, people like his own father and uncle who had done similar work at his age out of sheer necessity, would have feared fatigue because of its different toll on their bodies and minds.

When the author says " I will not learn in three months what my father had meant by real work", he refers to the hard manual labor that alien Mexicans and other

immigrants

undertake for the purpose of making a small living. According to Rodrigues' mother and father, 'real work' involves working with one's hands at manual jobs. Their only purpose for doing such work for little pay, was to make ends meet, and to find a foothold in the foreign soil of America where they hoped to make a living. Thus, his parents would think of the author's enjoyment in experiencing of the sensations of manual labour as far from the truth about 'real work'. Rodrigues' mother and father may not consider as 'real work' white collar jobs related to desk work, and working in comfortable or plush environments. The contemporary mode of working at computer systems may seem to them merely as pleasant pastimes, not to be regarded as actual work.

Rodrigues doubted his ability to understand real work because even if he worked in some kind of factory, like his father's last job, it would be a different experience for him. His long years of education would work to his advantage. He would be able to act as a public person, defending his interests, unionizing, petitioning, speaking up against discrimination, challenging the system, and demanding equal rights. These doors would not have opened for his father, or the group of alien Mexicans who quietly accepted the work load and the poor compensation they were given by the contractor. They were the Los Pobres or poor and powerless people, on account of not being native born Americans, being poor, as well as lacking education.

In one's personal opinion, there is no difference between 'real work' and 'not-real work', as both involve work for compensation, and their enjoyment

or otherwise will depend on one's approach and skills. While manual work tires the body, desk work can tire both the mind and the body, and both require the use of time and efforts.

A quotation from Wendell Berry's collection of poems on 'real work' is as follows":

The Real Work\*

It may be that when we no longer know what to do  
we have come to our real work,

and that when we no longer know which way to go  
we have come to our real journey.

The mind that is not baffled is not employed.

The impeded stream is the one that sings.

(<http://www.panhala.net/>),

[http://www.panhala.net/archive/the\\_real\\_work.html](http://www.panhala.net/archive/the_real_work.html)