

Nickle-and-dimed: on (not) getting by in america

[Literature](#), [Russian Literature](#)



Nickle-and-Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America Summary In her essay, Barbara Ehrenreich decided to learn what welfare mothers experience when they look for a source of income. She did not use the traditional way of learning like gathering information and data through observation and interviews, but she learned through experience and immersion. She decided to give up being a middle-class journalist for a while and became a manual worker. Her first dilemma was the house rental as it was expensive (Ehrenreich 93). She then settled for trailer house and sacrificed comfort just to be near employment opportunities. She had health and financial assistance waiting at the background while she analyzed and experienced the hardships of survival being experienced by low-wage earners. She found out how it was next to impossible for the low-wage earners to survive with their income coupled with the figures from institutions like Economic Policy Institute (Ehrenreich 94).

The next step she had done is to look for work while wearing simple clothes that would not attract suspicion to people. She took the booming hospitality industry in the Key West and checked out the available jobs. She even scrapped the ideas of becoming a waitress and front-desk clerk due to discomfort (Ehrenreich 95). She aced an interview, but she did not accept the job as the compensation was very low and could not at least match the shame that she would undergo during the urine test. She then ate at Wendy's with the unlimited sidebar of old beans and cheese. She got an application form from a food crew, but she chose to look for other jobs (Ehrenreich 96). After looking for work, she landed at serving tables as a waitress at a restaurant known as Hearthside, located at a cheap hotel. She

worked from 2: 00 to 10: 00pm with an hourly rate of \$2. 43 with tips (Ehrenreich 97).

She then became accustomed to her work as a waitress and began describing how she entertained the customers with her English and learned much about them and their tips (Ehrenreich 98). She mentioned Gail who taught her about how to serve the tables and learned much from her (Ehrenreich 99). Later on she slowly became disgusted with the top employees like the management because they were barred to enter the restaurant during day-offs to prevent grapevines and gossips (Ehrenreich 100). Drug test also became mandatory and suspected one of the cooks to be the culprit. After a week, she had created a survey of her coworkers at the restaurant (Ehrenreich 101-102).

She also discovered that the restaurant did not cover their medical expenses, so she chose to have another job and landed a work at Jerry's (Ehrenreich 103). She managed it for two days, but she quitted the first job as she was not able to reenergize herself during the one hour in-between the two jobs (Ehrenreich 104-105). The new restaurant she was working at is very much busier than the previous one as she worked for eight hours straight with only bathroom breaks. Lack of enough rest ate her physical health that required her to take ibuprofen to ease the pain of stress (Ehrenreich 106-107). Despite the hardships, she somehow enjoyed the experience when she met George, a Czech nineteen year-old dishwasher. Since the boy was new in America, she decided to teach him English (Ehrenreich 108-109).

Before she moved to Maine, she first transferred to a trailer near Key West

for shorter travel time. She got into a job as a housemaid where she must clean nineteen hotel rooms in one day (Ehrenreich 110-111). On the other hand, at Jerry's, George was accused of stealing something at the storage area that might lead to being fired (Ehrenreich 112).

Works Cited

Ehrenreich, Barbara. "Nickle-and-Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America."