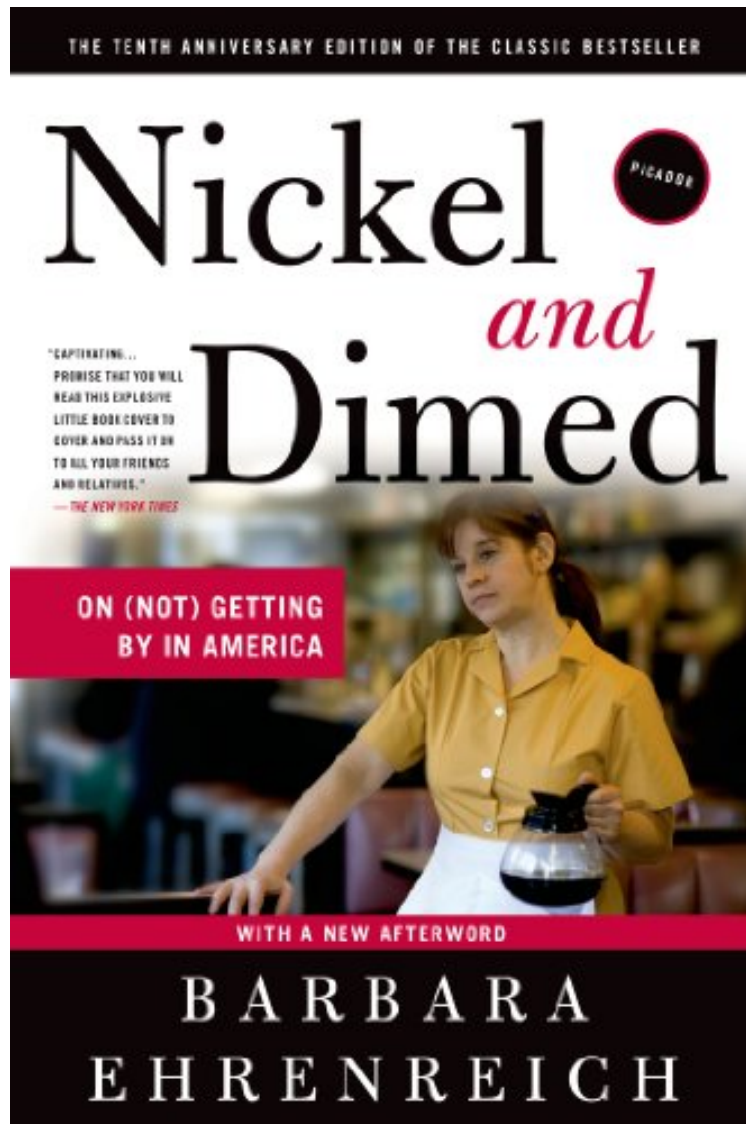


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Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America

Barbara Ehrenreich

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Barbara Ehrenreich : Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America before purchasing it in order to gauge whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Nickel and Dimed: On (Not) Getting By in America:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Not Exactly What I Expected, But Very Interesting and Insightful - I Really Enjoyed It.....By Allen From YardSignsFirst Of All - With The Title "Nickel And Dimed", I Was Expecting Something About All The Ways Companies Add Small Amounts To Bills And Stuff That Adds Up Quickly To A Lot Of Money.....BUT - Even Though I Enjoyed The Book, That's Not What It's About....The Book Is About The Author

Taking Low Paying Jobs In Several Cities Around The Country And Seeing What It's Like Trying To Get By As A Minimum Wage Earner All The While Keeping Careful Notes About Her Experiences.....I Do Wonder What Would've Been Different - If Anything - Had She Started Out With NO Money And NO Car, - And Also Spent More Time Doing The Low Wage Jobs...?...2 of 2 people found the following review helpful. Working 40 hours a week and still in poverty- that is immoralBy Yussuf A KalibThis book shows how our hard working people are working 80 hours a week and still losing ground and in poverty. In a country as blessed as ours, that is immoral and unacceptable. It will catch up with all of us at some point. A great book based on hard facts and an ugly reality we don't to admit1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Worthwhile ReadBy Pamela JaneThere were a few things she was doing like eating out often that I thought someone truly struggling wouldn't do, but the major insight in her book was how difficult transportation issues and the housing market was and of course it highlights why many women stay with men they shouldn't because financially they have little other options. Overall an interesting read, flaws in her experimental approach aside.

Our sharpest and most original social critic goes "undercover" as an unskilled worker to reveal the dark side of American prosperity. Millions of Americans work full time, year round, for poverty-level wages. In 1998, Barbara Ehrenreich decided to join them. She was inspired in part by the rhetoric surrounding welfare reform, which promised that a job -- any job -- can be the ticket to a better life. But how does anyone survive, let alone prosper, on \$6 an hour? To find out, Ehrenreich left her home, took the cheapest lodgings she could find, and accepted whatever jobs she was offered. Moving from Florida to Maine to Minnesota, she worked as a waitress, a hotel maid, a cleaning woman, a nursing-home aide, and a Wal-Mart sales clerk. She lived in trailer parks and crumbling residential motels. Very quickly, she discovered that no job is truly "unskilled," that even the lowliest occupations require exhausting mental and muscular effort. She also learned that one job is not enough; you need at least two if you int to live indoors. Nickel and Dime reveals low-rent America in all its tenacity, anxiety, and surprising generosity -- a land of Big Boxes, fast food, and a thousand desperate stratagems for survival. Read it for the smoldering clarity of Ehrenreich's perspective and for a rare view of how "prosperity" looks from the bottom. You will never see anything -- from a motel bathroom to a restaurant meal -- in quite the same way again.

.com Essayist and cultural critic Barbara Ehrenreich has always specialized in turning received wisdom on its head with intelligence, clarity, and verve. With some 12 million women being pushed into the labor market by welfare reform, she decided to do some good old-fashioned journalism and find out just how they were going to survive on the wages of the unskilled--at \$6 to \$7 an hour, only half of what is considered a living wage. So she did what millions of Americans do, she looked for a job and a place to live, worked that job, and tried to make ends meet. As a waitress in Florida, where her name is suddenly transposed to "girl," trailer trash becomes a demographic category to aspire to with rent at \$675 per month. In Maine, where she ends up working as both a cleaning woman and a nursing home assistant, she must first fill out endless pre-employment tests with trick questions such as "Some people work better when they're a little bit high." In Minnesota, she works at Wal-Mart under the repressive surveillance of men and women whose job it is to monitor her behavior for signs of sloth, theft, drug abuse, or worse. She even gets to experience the humiliation of the urine test. So, do the poor have survival strategies unknown to the middle class? And did Ehrenreich feel the "bracing psychological effects of getting out of the house, as promised by the wonks who brought us welfare reform?" Nah. Even in her best-case scenario, with all the advantages of education, health, a car, and money for first month's rent, she has to work two jobs, seven days a week, and still almost winds up in a shelter. As Ehrenreich points out with her potent combination of humor and outrage, the laws of supply and demand have been reversed. Rental prices skyrocket, but wages never rise. Rather, jobs are so cheap as measured by the pay that workers are encouraged to take as many as they can. Behind those trademark Wal-Mart vests, it turns out, are the borderline homeless. With her characteristic wry wit and her unabashedly liberal bent, Ehrenreich brings the invisible poor out of hiding and, in the process, the world they inhabit--where civil liberties are often ignored and hard work fails to live up to its reputation as the ticket out of poverty. --Lesley ReedFrom Publishers WeeklyIn contrast to recent books by Michael Lewis and Dinesh D'Souza that explore the lives and psyches of the New Economy's millionaires, Ehrenreich (Fear of Falling: The Inner Life of the Middle Class, etc.) turns her gimlet eye on the view from the workforce's bottom rung. Determined to find out how anyone could make ends meet on \$7 an hour, she left behind her middle class life as a journalist except for \$1000 in start-up funds, a car and her laptop computer to try to sustain herself as a low-skilled worker for a month at a time. In 1999 and 2000, Ehrenreich worked as a waitress in Key West, Fla., as a cleaning woman and a nursing home aide in Portland, Maine, and in a Wal-Mart in Minneapolis, Minn. During the application process, she faced routine drug tests and spurious "personality tests"; once on the job, she endured constant surveillance and numbing harangues over infractions like serving a second roll and butter. Beset by transportation costs and high rents, she learned the tricks of the trade from her co-workers, some of whom sleep in their cars, and many of whom work when they're vexed by arthritis, back pain or worse, yet still manage small gestures of kindness. Despite the advantages of her race, education, good health and lack of children, Ehrenreich's income barely covered

her month's expenses in only one instance, when she worked seven days a week at two jobs (one of which provided free meals) during the off-season in a vacation town. Delivering a fast read that's both sobering and sassy, she gives readers pause about those caught in the economy's undertow, even in good times. Copyright 2001 Cahners Business Information, Inc. From School Library Journal Adult/High School-Between 1998 and 2000, Ehrenreich spent about three months in three cities throughout the nation, attempting to "get by" on the salary available to low-paid and unskilled workers. Beginning with advantages not enjoyed by many such individuals-she is white, English-speaking, educated, healthy, and unburdened with transportation or child-care worries-she tried to support herself by working as a waitress, a cleaning woman, a nursing-home aide, and a Wal-Mart employee. She discovered that her average salary of \$7 per hour couldn't even provide the necessities of life (rent, transportation, and food), let alone the luxury of health coverage. Her account is at once enraging and sobering. In straightforward language, she describes how labor-intensive, demeaning, and controlling such jobs can be: she scrubbed floors on her hands and knees, and found out that talking to coworkers while on the job was considered "time theft." She describes full-time workers who sleep in their cars because they cannot afford housing and employees who yearn for the ability to "take a day off now and then-and still be able to buy groceries the next day." In a concluding chapter, Ehrenreich takes on issues and questions posed before and during the experiment, including why these wages are so low, why workers are so accepting of them, and what Washington's refusal to increase the minimum wage to a realistic "living wage" says about both our economy and our culture. Mandatory reading for any workforce entrant. Dori DeSpain, Fairfax County Public Library, VA Copyright 2002 Cahners Business Information, Inc.