

Nickel and Dimed bookmark

Name: _____

Sun Oct 25	Mon 26 Pg. 8	T	Wed 28 Pg. 24	T H	F	Sat 31 Pg. 48
Sun Nov 1 Pg. 54	Mon Nov 2 Pg. 62 Q's 1-2 due		Wed Nov 4 Pg. 78			Sat Nov 7 Pg. 102
Sun Nov 8 Pg. 110	Mon Nov 9 Pg. 118 Q's 3-5 due		Wed Nov 11 Pg. 132			Sat Nov 14 Pg. 152
Sun Nov 15 Pg. 160	Mon Nov 16 Pg. 168 Q's 6-8 due		Wed Nov 18 Pg. 182			Sat Nov 21 Pg. 206
Sun Nov 22 Pg. 214	Mon Nov 23 Pg. 222 Q's 9-11 due		Wed Nov 25 Pg. 235 (finish book)	THANKS-GIVING		Sat Nov 28
Sun Nov 29	Mon Nov 30 Q's 12-14 due		Wed Dec 2			Sat Dec 5

Keep in mind!

--You will create a monologue by a character, probably of your choice, in the book.

--We will be doing a research paper unit soon. What in this book inspires you ask questions you would be interested in researching? You would do yourself a favor by keeping track of your questions and interests with post-its.

Answer ALL of the following questions, embed quotes from the book where indicated. All answers must be word-processed.

1. **EMBED QUOTES** Early in her book *Nickel and Dimed*, author Barbara Ehrenreich admits that she has many advantages over "real" low-wage workers. What sets her apart from the average low-wage worker? In her desire to "experience poverty," what rules does she set for herself?

2. Minimum wage workers often report feeling invisible. Where do you encounter minimum wage workers? What sorts of services do they provide?

3. **EMBED QUOTES** On page 27, Ehrenreich writes: "There are no secret economies that nourish the poor; on the contrary, there are a host of special costs." Describe some of these costs. How do the people in *Nickel and Dimed* deal with these costs?

4. Most of the low-income workers Ehrenreich encounters are women. Is there a connection between "women's work" and low wages? Explain some of the social and historical reasons for this situation.
5. The Poverty Guideline is issued each year by the Department of Health and Human Services. In 2004, HHS found that for a family of four to live above the poverty line, they had to earn \$18,850. Describe life in your hometown for a family of four living just above the poverty line. Where would they live? Work? What would they eat? What daily challenges would they face?
6. How would you characterize your relationship to the American Dream? Do your goals seem achievable? How?
7. **EMBED QUOTES** As a reader, we get to know many of Ehrenreich's coworkers. Why does the author use personal narratives in *Nickel and Dimed*? Choose one person's story to examine. What about the story surprises you? (and/or, depresses you?)
8. **EMBED QUOTES** Ehrenreich reports at length about the sorts of physical ailments low-wage workers have to endure. What are they? How are they dealt with?
9. **EMBED QUOTES** "It is common, among the nonpoor," writes Ehrenreich, "to think of poverty as a sustainable condition. They are 'always with us.' What is harder for the nonpoor to see is poverty as acute distress," due to poor nutrition, homelessness and lack of affordable housing, injuries, and little to no health insurance. Ehrenreich argues that far from being sustainable, poverty is a "state of emergency." Do you agree? Explain.
10. Ehrenreich concluded that had her working life been spent in a Wal-Mart -- like environment, she would have emerged a different person -- meaner, pettier, "Barb" instead of "Barbara." How would your personality change if you were in all "regular ed." courses? Be specific
11. Were your perceptions of blue-collar Americans transformed or reinforced by *Nickel and Dimed*? Have your notions of poverty and prosperity changed since reading the book? What about your own treatment of waiters, maids, and sales-people?
12. How does managers' scrutiny -- "time theft" crackdowns and drug testing -- affect workers' morale? How can American companies make the workplace environment safe and efficient without treating employees like suspected criminals?
13. In the "Evaluation" chapter of *Nickel and Dimed*, Ehrenreich discusses the personal and social challenges of "achieving a decent fit between income and expenses." What are some of these challenges? What solutions would you propose?
14. **EMBED QUOTES / 1.5 PAGES, DOUBLE-SPACED** After reading *Nickel and Dimed*, do you think that having a job -- any job -- is better than no job at all? Did this book make you feel angry? Better informed? Relieved that someone has finally described these experiences? Wanting to do something? Discuss your reaction to the book.