

**Frederica Academy Upper School
AP Language & Composition
Summer Reading and Writing Assignment**

From Macmillan Publishers:

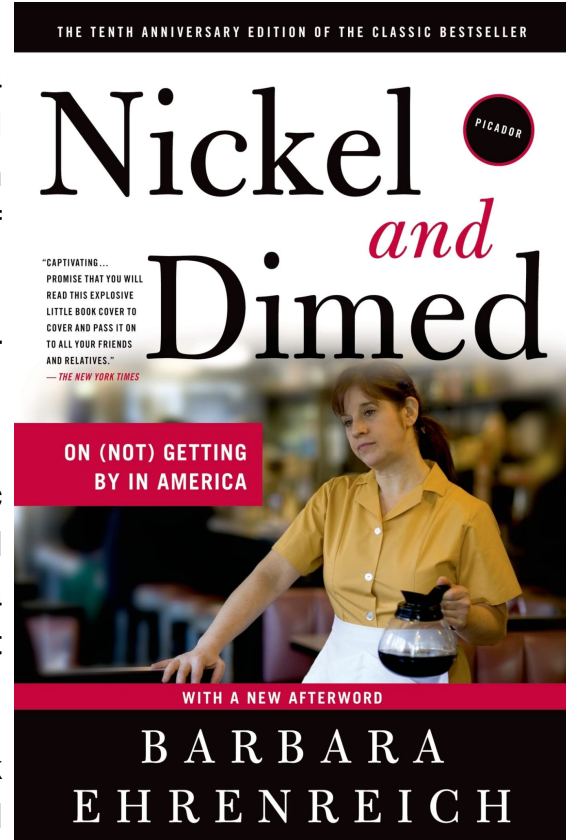
“In this now classic work, Barbara Ehrenreich, our sharpest and most original social critic, goes ‘undercover’ as an unskilled worker to reveal the dark side of American prosperity.

“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[er] to live indoors.

“*Nickel and Dimed* 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.”



Respond to **one** of the following writing prompts (each response should be no less than 600 words)

Argumentative Essay: Traditionally, the argument regarding the federal minimum wage has been mostly centered around whether it should be raised or remain the same. Though cities vary regarding what they can pay for minimum wage, many argue that raising the minimum wage alone will not fully cover the living expenses needed to survive in the United States. Do you believe that raising the minimum wage alone would be enough to improve the quality of life for low-wage workers? Be sure to provide evidence from the text to support your reasoning.

Perspective of Privilege: The author becomes aware of her own privilege throughout the text. How does the author become aware of her advantages as a white, upper-middle class woman? Using textual examples explain the advantages the author discovers that she has that poorer people do not have and how she becomes aware of her advantages.

Article & Book Similarities: *Nickel and Dimed* was written in the late 90s. In the text she provides information on what it is like to be the “working poor” in the United States at that time. Although the article [“Why it costs so much to be poor in America”](#) was written in January 2018, both the article and the book have many similar themes and ideas of what it is like to work and not get by in America. Explain the similarities present in both the article and the book. Be sure to use evidence from both texts to support your response.