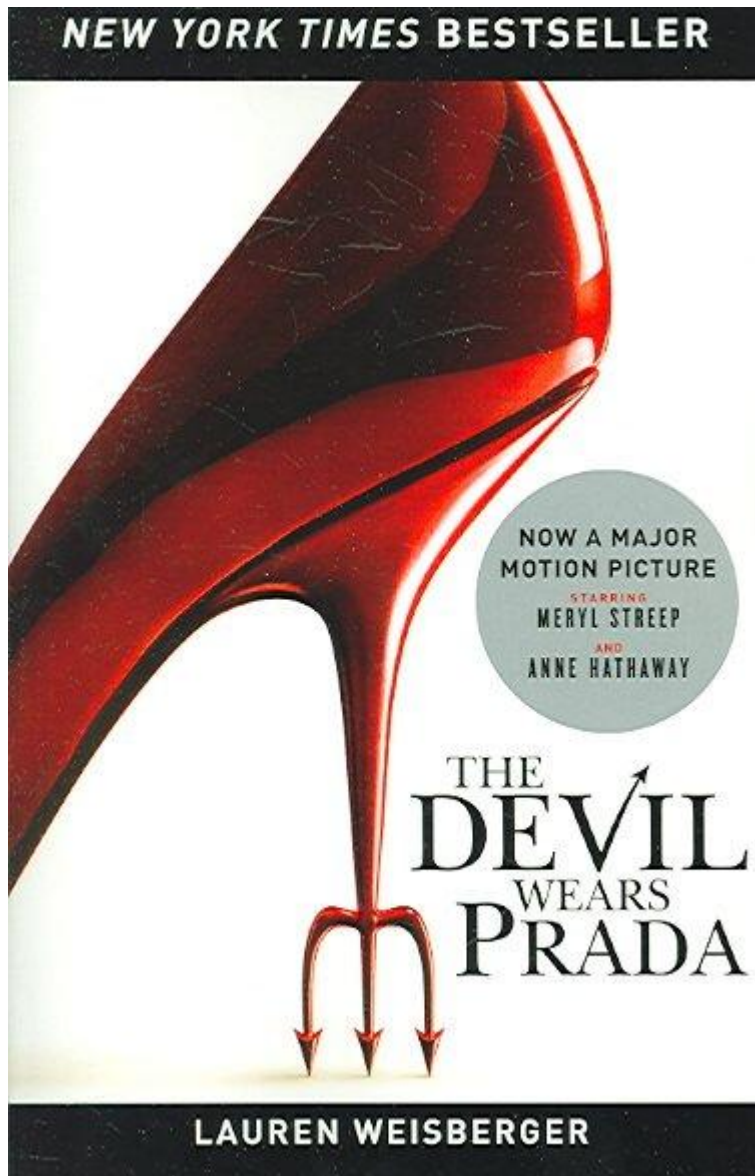


## About the book...



A small-town girl fresh out of an Ivy League college lands a job at a prestigious fashion magazine, but wonders if the glamorous perks are worth working for the editor from hell.

## About the author... (Literature Resource Center)

"When *The Devil Wears Prada* was published in the spring of 2003, it became a bestseller as much for what it was about as for who it was about. Prior to writing the book, Weisberger worked as the personal assistant for Anna Wintour, the editor-in-chief of *American Vogue*, and the book was widely rumored to be a dishy exposé about working for the notoriously difficult fashion icon. Interest in the book even before it was finished led to a bidding war that gained Weisberger a lucrative deal for both the book and film rights.

Like her heroine, Weisberger graduated from an Ivy League school in 1999 and quickly landed her job at *Vogue*, where she was launched into the fashion world with little preparation or experience. She quit after a year, and when her next job left her enough time to enroll in a writing seminar, she compiled a collection of vignettes based on her work experiences that her instructor urged her to submit to an agent. The agent, Deborah Schneider, generated lots of advance buzz about the book, and by the time it was published, expectations were high. As Kate Betts noted in the *New York Times*: "Does it even matter what's actually on the page when everybody is reading between the lines?"

...

In interviews, Weisberger distanced the character of Miranda from her former boss and discouraged comparisons between *Runway* and *Vogue*. Miranda "is certainly not modeled after Anna," she told David D. Kirkpatrick of the *New York Times*. On the contrary, she continued, "there was something amazing about getting to work for and see this incredibly bright, powerful woman."

## Reviews

### *Booklist:*

In this debut novel (part of a wave of exposes about bad bosses that is sweeping the publishing world), former *Vogue* assistant Weisberger provides a telling account of life as an underling at the fictional *Runway* magazine. Here we meet Andrea Sachs, a recent Ivy League graduate hoping to break into the magazine business, with her ultimate goal being a job at the *New Yorker*. She accepts an entry-level position at *Runway* as personal assistant to the editor, Miranda Priestley (rumored to be based on *Vogue*'s Anna Wintour). However, her new job has nothing to do with writing or editing, and everything to do with predicting and fulfilling every outrageous whim her prima donna boss might have. While the job makes incredible demands on Sachs' personal life, the perks are undeniable: rubbing elbows with celebrities, being outfitted in designer clothes, and jetting off to Paris for fashion shows. Yet Weisberger's characters are all uniformly shallow and two-dimensional, and she seems to be worshiping this lifestyle at the same time that she is supposedly skewering it. However, the book is garnering lots of press, with a film deal also in the works, and Weisberger's dishy style will appeal to many readers.

### *Publishers Weekly:*

Most recent college grads know they have to start at the bottom and work their way up. But not many picture themselves having to pick up their boss's dry cleaning, deliver them hot lattes, land them copies of the newest Harry Potter book before it hits stores and screen potential nannies for their children. Charmingly unfashionable Andrea Sachs, upon graduating from Brown, finds herself in this precarious position: she's an assistant to the most revered—and hated—woman in fashion, *Runway* editor-in-chief Miranda Priestley. The self-described "biggest fashion loser to ever hit the scene," Andy takes the job hoping to land at the *New Yorker* after a year. As the "lowest-paid-but-most-highly-perked assistant in the free world," she

soon learns her Nine West loafers won't cut it—everyone wears Jimmy Choos or Manolos—and that the four years she spent memorizing poems and examining prose will not help her in her new role of "finding, fetching, or faxing" whatever the diabolical Miranda wants, immediately. Life is pretty grim for Andy, but Weisberger, whose stint as Anna Wintour's assistant at Vogue couldn't possibly have anything to do with the novel's inspiration, infuses the narrative with plenty of dead-on assessments of fashion's frivolity and realistic, funny portrayals of life as a peon. Andy's mishaps will undoubtedly elicit laughter from readers, and the story's even got a virtuous little moral at its heart. Weisberger has penned a comic novel that manages to rise to the upper echelons of the chick-lit genre.

*Library Journal:*

This chic read is sure to take the fashion world by storm, although the literary world may find it lacking. Weisberger, former assistant to Vogue editor Anna Wintour, has created a fictionalized tell-all à la Emma McLaughlin and Nicola Kraus's *The Nanny Diaries*. Andrea is a nice Jewish girl from suburban Connecticut who, as Weisberger repeatedly tells us, lands "a job a million girls would die for" as assistant to Miranda Priestly, the imperious editor of *Runway* magazine. But the job is more like indentured servitude with a one-year contract; 14-hour days are de rigueur and encompass such delights as sorting Miranda's laundry, fetching her lunch, and responding instantly to such commands as "Ahn-dre-ah, hand me a scarf." The carrot at the end of the stick is the promise of a dream job with *The New Yorker*, which somehow makes palatable Miranda's invectives and the ensuing downhill slide of Andrea's personal life. This fast-paced black comedy has enough dirt to please any fashionista but should serve as fair warning for every girl who dreams of working at a fashion magazine. Despite the pedestrian writing, the prepublication buzz on this novel is big, so buy for demand.

*Kirkus:*

A junior assistantship to the editor of the world's top fashion magazine ("The job a million girls would die for") provides endless fodder for a one-note but on-the-money kiss-and-tell debut.

Andy, or, as her boss from hell calls her: "Ahn-dre-ah," harbors dreams of writing for *The New Yorker*, but her luck runs out—or runs high, depending on your priorities—when her first job interview lands her at *Runway* magazine, beholden to Miranda Priestly, "solely responsible for anticipating her needs and accommodating them." Intelligent, sarcastic and without a smidgen of interest in fashion, Andrea quickly learns the *Runway* culture, from the necessity of being tall, emaciated, slavish, and half-naked in winter to the perks of town cars, shopping bags filled with designer duds, and the promise of any job after one year of servitude. A few weeks of dealing with the insensitive, sadistic and imperious Miranda leave our heroine on the verge of abdicating, but before long she's joining her colleagues in "the classic *Runway* Paranoid Turnaround . . . scrambling to negate whatever blasphemy is uttered" about the divine Miranda." Outside of work, Andrea has a perfectly nice socially conscious boyfriend from her college days at Brown, a best-

friend-slash-roommate with a drinking problem who's getting her doctorate at Columbia, a loving family in Connecticut, and no time for any of them as she races to retrieve Miranda's French bulldog puppy from the vet, hire a nanny for her children, make 12 trips in stiletto heels to Starbucks for her coffee in between sorting her dirty dry cleaning. It's only a 14-hour day! Ultimately, of course, everything explodes, and in the end, of course, righteousness prevails.

Weisberger writes with humor and authority, but her plot circles like a whirlpool—and by the time Andrea's ready to face some hard choices, it's difficult to care. Her exhaustion is contagious. (N.B: Weisberger, this season's buzz of the town, was an assistant to Vogue editrix Anna Wintour—read: Miranda Priestly—giving this putative roman-à-clef an added splash of juice.)

### **Discussion questions**

1. What do you think about Nigel's pep talk to Andy when she whines to him about her job? Is he right or is she justified in her complaints about her work?
2. Trace the way Andy changes throughout the course of her job. Does she ever "sell out"? If so, at what point?
3. For what qualities are women considered beautiful or important throughout the book and the movie? In what ways do you agree or disagree with these messages?

### **Read Alikes** (*NoveList*)

Sally Koslow, *Little Pink Slips* (2007)

Emma McLaughlin and Nicola Kraus, *The Nanny Diaries* (2002)

Lynn Messina, *Fashionistas* (2003)

Diane Vadino, *Smart Girls Like Me* (2007)

Lauren Weisberger, *Everyone Worth Knowing* (2005)