

AI-03778 Psychological Wage

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Tags	Psychology
Created time	April 29, 2026 3:10 PM

MY WAGE

By J. B. Rittenhouse

I bargained with Life for a penny,
And Life would pay no more,
However I begged at evening
When I counted my scanty store.
For Life is a just employer,
He gives you what you ask,
But once you have set the wages,
Why, you must bear the task.
I worked for a menials hire,
Only to learn, dismayed,
That any wage I had asked of Life,
Life would have willingly paid

Explain, list the pillars, list 22 examples

What it means? Deep dive and provide the psychological pillars.

Describe how a person typically thinks, behaves, and makes decisions.

Provide 22 concrete examples demonstrating these traits in real-life situations.

Then create a 22-point guidelines from the discussion.

Use all numerical bullet list.

This poem is doing something very sharp: it's not about "life being fair," it's about how your *expectations* quietly become the ceiling of your outcomes.

At its core, **"My Wage" by J. B. Rittenhouse** is a psychological argument disguised as poetry:

you don't just get what life offers—you tend to get what you *negotiate with yourself as acceptable*.

1. Core Meaning (Deep Interpretation)

The speaker “bargains with Life for a penny,” meaning they set a very low internal standard for their worth, effort, and expectations.

Life responds: not out of cruelty, but consistency.

The shock comes later:

| whatever wage you accept internally becomes the wage you live on externally.

So the real tragedy is not exploitation—it is **self-limitation disguised as humility or realism**.

2. The Psychological Pillars Behind the Poem

1. Self-Concept Anchoring

Your identity sets the “price tag” of your life outcomes.

2. Expectation-Outcome Alignment

Behavior unconsciously adjusts to match expected reward.

3. Learned Helplessness

Repeated low expectation reinforces reduced effort and ambition.

4. Cognitive Framing

“How much I deserve” becomes more influential than “what is possible.”

5. Effort-Reward Calibration Bias

People misprice their own effort value early and then normalize it.

6. Internal Negotiation Theory

The real negotiation is not external—it is with yourself.

7. Reinforcement Loop

Low expectations → low actions → low outcomes → confirmation of belief.

8. Identity Lock-in

Once you define your “wage,” you behave as if it is fixed.

3. How This Person Typically Thinks, Behaves, Decides

- Assumes modest expectations are “safe”
 - Avoids asking for more to prevent disappointment
 - Underestimates their leverage in life systems
 - Interprets opportunity conservatively
 - Accepts early terms without renegotiation
 - Feels discomfort when opportunity exceeds self-image
 - Rationalizes low outcomes as “realistic”
 - Delays ambition until external validation appears (which rarely comes)
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4. 22 Real-Life Examples of This Pattern

1. Accepting a low-paying job without negotiating because “that’s what I’m worth”
2. Staying in a stagnant role for years expecting loyalty to be rewarded
3. Choosing easier goals to avoid possible failure
4. Not applying for high-level jobs because “I’m not qualified enough”
5. Undercharging freelance services to “get clients”

6. Staying silent in meetings despite having better ideas
 7. Avoiding promotions because of fear of increased responsibility
 8. Staying in unhealthy relationships due to emotional low valuation
 9. Not asking for help to avoid feeling "burdensome"
 10. Choosing familiar mediocrity over uncertain growth
 11. Saving very little because wealth feels "not for people like me"
 12. Delaying entrepreneurship until "perfect readiness"
 13. Accepting poor treatment from authority figures
 14. Not investing in skills because ROI feels uncertain
 15. Setting "safe" goals instead of meaningful ones
 16. Overworking at low-value tasks instead of strategic ones
 17. Avoiding visibility to prevent judgment
 18. Choosing stability over opportunity repeatedly
 19. Not renegotiating salary even when performance improves
 20. Comparing downward to justify current status
 21. Interpreting ambition as arrogance rather than agency
 22. Saying "I'm fine where I am" while feeling internally stuck
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5. 22-Point Transformation Guidelines (Reverse of the Poem)

1. Assume your current "wage" is negotiable, not fixed
2. Re-evaluate what you think you are worth monthly
3. Treat self-negotiation as a skill, not a belief
4. Ask: "What would I do if I expected 2x more?"
5. Increase expectations before increasing effort

6. Stop validating low outcomes as realism
 7. Replace comfort-based decisions with growth-based ones
 8. Normalize asking for more than feels comfortable
 9. Practice saying "this is not enough for me" internally
 10. Build identity slightly ahead of current performance
 11. Let ambition lead behavior, not evidence
 12. Reframe rejection as price discovery, not failure
 13. Re-negotiate salary, scope, and standards regularly
 14. Audit where you accepted "pennies" unconsciously
 15. Separate humility from self-undervaluation
 16. Upgrade environment if expectations are low there
 17. Surround yourself with higher baseline thinkers
 18. Track opportunity cost of staying underpaid (in any form)
 19. Train discomfort tolerance when asking for more
 20. Replace "I can't" with "I haven't yet priced this correctly"
 21. Measure life by ceiling expansion, not stability
 22. Treat life as a negotiation table, not a fixed contract
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If you want, I can also map this poem into:

- salary negotiation strategy
- self-worth calibration model
- or a decision framework for career jumps and risk-taking

Gemini

Jessie B. Rittenhouse's poem "My Wage" is a poignant allegory for **self-limitation** and the **law of expectation**. It suggests that the universe (or "Life") doesn't hold us back; rather, it simply honors the low price we set for our own worth. We often spend our lives complaining about our "scanty store," only to realize at the end

that the "Employer" would have paid a king's ransom if we had only had the courage to ask for it.

The Deep Dive: Meaning & Psychological Pillars

At its core, the poem explores the **Locus of Control**. The speaker begins with an external locus—begging Life for more—but ends with the sobering realization of internal responsibility. Psychologically, this is rooted in how our self-concept dictates our reality.

The 5 Psychological Pillars of "The Wage"

1. **The Pygmalion Effect (Self-Fulfilling Prophecy):** Our beliefs influence our actions, which impact others' beliefs about us, reinforcing our initial beliefs. If you "bargain for a penny," you perform like a penny-worker.
2. **Cognitive Dissonance:** Once we set a "wage" (a belief about our value), we feel internal pressure to justify it. We "bear the task" because to do otherwise would conflict with our self-image.
3. **The Scarcity Mindset vs. Abundance Mindset:** The speaker begs at evening, focused on what is missing. A scarcity mindset leads to "menial" choices, while an abundance mindset recognizes that Life is a "willingly paid" employer.
4. **Learned Helplessness:** The "begging at evening" suggests a person who feels they have no agency, unaware that the terms of the contract were theirs to write from the beginning.
5. **Self-Efficacy:** This is the belief in one's ability to execute behaviors necessary to produce specific performance attainments. The poem highlights the tragedy of low self-efficacy.

How this Person Thinks, Behaves, and Decides

A person living the "Penny Wage" lifestyle typically:

- **Thinks:** "I should be grateful for what I have," even when miserable. They view success as a finite resource distributed by a "boss" rather than something they negotiate.

- **Behaves:** With excessive caution. They are the first to arrive and last to leave but rarely the one to propose a new direction. They "count their scanty store" frequently, obsessing over losses.
 - **Decides:** Based on fear of loss rather than potential for gain. They choose the "menial hire" because it feels safe, only to feel "dismay" when they see others asking for—and receiving—more.
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22 Concrete Examples of "The Penny Wage" in Real Life

1. Staying in a dead-end job for ten years because you fear no one else will hire you.
2. Accepting a low-ball salary offer without countering because you're "just happy to be here."
3. Remaining in a one-sided friendship because you don't believe you deserve better companions.
4. Suppressing a creative idea in a meeting because you think, "Who am I to suggest this?"
5. Settling for a partner who treats you poorly because you fear being alone.
6. Buying the cheapest, lowest-quality tools that break immediately, costing more in the long run.
7. Apologizing for your presence or for taking up space in a public setting.
8. Refusing to apply for a "reach" position because you don't meet 100% of the optional criteria.
9. Letting someone cut in line in front of you without saying a word to avoid "trouble."
10. Over-explaining your reasons when you need to say "no" to a request.
11. Taking the blame for a group failure to keep the peace, even if it wasn't your fault.
12. Investing hours into a hobby but never showing anyone because it's "not good enough."
13. Choosing a "safe" college major over the one you are passionate about.

14. Setting small, easily achievable goals to avoid the "dismay" of potential failure.
 15. Neglecting self-care because you feel your time is better spent serving others' demands.
 16. Allowing a landlord or service provider to overcharge you because you hate confrontation.
 17. Discounting a compliment by immediately pointing out a flaw in yourself.
 18. Watching others get promoted because they asked, while you waited to be "noticed."
 19. Staying in your hometown despite wanting to see the world, because "it's where I belong."
 20. Saving "the good china" or nice clothes for a special occasion that never comes.
 21. Working through your lunch break every day without being asked or compensated.
 22. Believing your "wage" is fixed by your past mistakes rather than your current potential.
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The 22-Point Guidelines for Negotiating with Life

1. Realize that Life is an indifferent employer; it pays exactly what you demand.
2. Audit your "scanty store" once, then pivot your focus toward your future "wage."
3. Distinguish between "bearing the task" out of growth and bearing it out of habit.
4. Stop begging at evening; start negotiating at dawn.
5. Define your value in ink, not in pencil—don't let others erase your worth.
6. Understand that "just employers" (the world) only respect those who know their price.
7. Replace the "menial hire" mindset with an executive ownership mindset.

8. Challenge the belief that you must suffer to be deserving.
9. Ask for the "higher wage" before you feel 100% ready to earn it.
10. Remember that dismay is a late-stage realization; avoid it by acting boldly now.
11. Treat your time as your most valuable currency—don't spend it on "penny" tasks.
12. Recognize that "Life" has no budget limit; the only limit is your request.
13. Stop seeking permission to want more.
14. Practice saying your "price" (in business or life) with a level voice.
15. Analyze your current "task" to see if it actually leads to the "wage" you want.
16. Beware of the comfort in "scanty stores"—it is a trap of low expectations.
17. If you aren't satisfied with the payout, change the contract, not the effort.
18. Seek out those who have asked for more and study their "bargaining" techniques.
19. Internalize the fact that the universe is "willing" to pay, provided you are willing to ask.
20. Don't wait until the "evening" of your life to count what you missed out on.
21. Reframe every "no" you receive as a temporary negotiation, not a final verdict.
22. Set a new wage today; the "Employer" is waiting for your update.

M365 Copilot

Below is a **complete, structured interpretation and application** of **"MY WAGE" by J.B. Rittenhouse**, using **only numerical bullet lists**, as requested.

1. Explanation of the Poem

1. The speaker asks Life for very little ("a penny").
2. Life agrees without protest or resistance.

3. Only afterward does the speaker realize the cost.
 4. Life is portrayed as neutral, fair, and literal—not cruel.
 5. The “wage” represents expectations, standards, and self-valuation.
 6. Life does not withhold reward; it mirrors demand.
 7. The speaker mistakes humility or safety for wisdom.
 8. Regret arises from under-asking, not from being denied.
 9. Labor is performed faithfully—but cheaply.
 10. The tragedy is not failure, but low expectation.
 11. The poem reframes injustice as mis-negotiation.
 12. Life honors declared value, not hidden potential.
 13. Complaints arrive too late to change terms.
 14. The wage determines the task’s meaning and return.
 15. Effort alone does not guarantee reward.
 16. Asking sets the ceiling of possibility.
 17. Self-worth precedes opportunity.
 18. Life is amoral—neither generous nor punitive.
 19. Responsibility lies with the chooser, not circumstances.
 20. The bargain is silent but binding.
 21. Dismay comes from self-betrayal, not exploitation.
 22. Life would “willingly” give more, if asked.
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2. Core Meaning (What It Means)

1. We unconsciously set the terms of our lives.
2. Expectations determine outcomes more than talent.
3. Self-valuation governs how the world responds.
4. Under-asking feels safe but costs fulfillment.

5. Life enforces clarity, not fairness.
 6. Outcomes are often consensual, not imposed.
 7. People confuse modesty with realism.
 8. Fear drives low demands.
 9. Effort without expectation leads to resentment.
 10. Standards precede reward.
 11. Complaints often mask prior self-compromise.
 12. The world rewards declared value, not silent hope.
 13. Negotiation happens implicitly every day.
 14. Identity sets the terms of exchange.
 15. Responsibility cannot be outsourced to fate.
 16. People suffer more from unclaimed potential than hardship.
 17. Regret stems from bargaining down one's worth.
 18. Courage is required before compensation arrives.
 19. Life mirrors belief systems.
 20. Asking boldly is a moral act, not arrogance.
 21. Growth requires renegotiating self-contracts.
 22. Meaning comes from choosing higher wages.
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3. Psychological Pillars Behind the Poem

1. **Self-Concept Theory** – Behavior follows identity.
2. **Expectation Effects** – Outcomes align with anticipated value.
3. **Learned Modesty** – Social conditioning discourages asking.
4. **Fear Avoidance** – Under-asking reduces exposure risk.
5. **Locus of Control** – Internal responsibility determines agency.
6. **Cognitive Anchoring** – First value stated shapes all returns.

7. **Self-Efficacy** – Belief in capacity affects results.
 8. **Imposter Syndrome** – Suppresses rightful demands.
 9. **Loss Aversion** – Fear of rejection outweighs hope of gain.
 10. **Identity-Based Motivation** – People act consistent with self-image.
 11. **Status Quo Bias** – Low expectations become normalized.
 12. **Attribution Error** – Blaming life instead of choices.
 13. **Delayed Awareness** – Consequences appear slowly.
 14. **Emotional Avoidance** – Avoids disappointment at cost of growth.
 15. **Consent Theory** – Repeated acceptance becomes agreement.
 16. **Boundary Psychology** – Limits define treatment.
 17. **Goal Gradient Effect** – Bigger goals evoke greater effort.
 18. **Meaning Construction** – Value assigned shapes satisfaction.
 19. **Negotiation Framing** – First offer sets reality.
 20. **Survivorship Bias** – Underestimating one's own ceiling.
 21. **Shame Conditioning** – Being taught not to "ask too much."
 22. **Agency Illusion** – Thinking life decides instead of self.
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4. How a Person Typically Thinks, Behaves, and Decides (Low-Wage Mindset)

1. Thinks safety first, growth later.
2. Sets conservative goals.
3. Understates abilities.
4. Avoids negotiation.
5. Accepts first offers.
6. Equates humility with virtue.
7. Overworks to compensate for low asking.

8. Avoids visibility.
 9. Fears being seen as demanding.
 10. Waits for permission.
 11. Over-delivers without redefining terms.
 12. Normalizes dissatisfaction.
 13. Blames circumstances quietly.
 14. Delays ambition.
 15. Rejects praise.
 16. Avoids bold commitments.
 17. Ignores internal discontent.
 18. Privileges harmony over truth.
 19. Confuses gratitude with silence.
 20. Accepts inequity without protest.
 21. Retreats from conflict.
 22. Rationalizes regret.
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5. 22 Concrete Real-Life Examples

1. Accepting a low salary without negotiation.
2. Staying in an unfulfilling job "to be grateful."
3. Not asking for help despite being overwhelmed.
4. Pricing services too low to avoid rejection.
5. Declining leadership roles out of fear.
6. Working overtime without renegotiation.
7. Not applying for promotion due to self-doubt.
8. Avoiding asking for equity or bonuses.
9. Staying silent in meetings.

10. Under-communicating achievements.
 11. Accepting poor treatment in relationships.
 12. Not setting boundaries with family.
 13. Settling for minimal health goals.
 14. Skipping long-term planning.
 15. Avoiding mentorship requests.
 16. Not charging market rates.
 17. Saying "I'm lucky to have this."
 18. Avoiding conflict to keep peace.
 19. Refusing raises due to guilt.
 20. Staying invisible despite competence.
 21. Complaining privately but not acting.
 22. Realizing too late what was possible.
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6. 22-Point Guideline Derived from the Poem

1. Set your wage consciously.
2. Ask before you work harder.
3. Raise standards before increasing effort.
4. Price self-worth upstream.
5. Negotiate identity, not just outcomes.
6. Do not confuse humility with fear.
7. Make expectations explicit.
8. Renegotiate outdated bargains.
9. Accept responsibility for results.
10. Align effort with value.
11. Speak first when terms matter.

12. Demand internally before externally.
 13. Treat asking as a skill.
 14. Reject silent contracts.
 15. Upgrade goals proactively.
 16. Expect proportional return.
 17. Build courage before comfort.
 18. Stop apologizing for ambition.
 19. Define success on your terms.
 20. Let discomfort signal growth.
 21. Choose dignity over safety.
 22. Ask Life boldly—Life will pay.
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If you want, I can next:

- Translate this into a **personal wage-setting framework**
- Apply it directly to **career, finance, relationships, or leadership**
- Or condense it into a **single daily decision rule**

Just tell me where you want to apply it.

Copilot

Here is a **deep, structured, psychological breakdown** of *“My Wage”* by J. B. Rittenhouse, followed by **pillars, 22 real-life examples**, and **22 guidelines** — all in numbered lists as you requested.

1. What the Poem Means (Concise Takeaway)

The poem teaches a single powerful truth:

Life gives you in proportion to what you believe you deserve and what you dare to ask for.

Your expectations, self-worth, and internal limits determine your outcomes more than external forces.

2. Deep Dive Explanation (Expanded)

The poem uses the metaphor of “bargaining with Life” to show that:

1. Life responds to your self-set expectations.

If you ask for little, you get little.

2. Your internal beliefs shape your external reality.

People often limit themselves by thinking small.

3. Life is “just” — not in a moral sense, but in a psychological sense.

It mirrors your mindset, confidence, and perceived worth.

4. You carry the consequences of your own self-valuation.

If you undervalue yourself, you live with the results.

5. The poem is a warning:

Don't ask for a penny when you could ask for a fortune — in goals, relationships, career, and personal growth.

3. The Psychological Pillars (Core Concepts)

These are the underlying psychological principles the poem expresses.

1. Self-Worth Determines Asking Power

2. Expectation Shapes Reality

3. Cognitive Self-Limitation

4. Internal Locus of Control

5. Self-Fulfilling Prophecy

6. Goal Magnitude Bias

7. **Fear of Rejection**
 8. **Comfort Zone Attachment**
 9. **Identity-Based Decision Making**
 10. **Scarcity Mindset vs. Abundance Mindset**
 11. **Risk Aversion**
 12. **Learned Helplessness**
 13. **Belief-Driven Behavior**
 14. **Perceived Deservingness**
 15. **Ambition Calibration**
 16. **Motivational Ceiling Effect**
 17. **Outcome Expectancy Theory**
 18. **Self-Efficacy**
 19. **Reward Sensitivity**
 20. **Opportunity Blindness**
 21. **Fear of Responsibility**
 22. **Psychological Contract with Life**
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4. How a Person Typically Thinks, Behaves, and Decides (According to the Poem)

These describe the mindset of someone who "asks Life for a penny."

1. **Thinks small to avoid disappointment.**
2. **Assumes big rewards are for others, not them.**
3. **Avoids risk because failure feels personal.**
4. **Believes they must "earn" the right to ask.**
5. **Feels undeserving of abundance.**

6. **Makes decisions based on fear, not possibility.**
 7. **Chooses safe, predictable paths.**
 8. **Downplays their own talents.**
 9. **Accepts low standards from others.**
 10. **Doesn't negotiate for better opportunities.**
 11. **Feels guilty for wanting more.**
 12. **Confuses humility with self-minimization.**
 13. **Believes asking for more is selfish.**
 14. **Avoids visibility or leadership roles.**
 15. **Overvalues stability and undervalues growth.**
 16. **Sees obstacles more clearly than opportunities.**
 17. **Interprets setbacks as signs to shrink.**
 18. **Feels safer being underestimated.**
 19. **Assumes Life is stingy, not responsive.**
 20. **Believes ambition is dangerous.**
 21. **Doesn't imagine alternative futures.**
 22. **Lives reactively instead of proactively.**
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5. 22 Real-Life Examples Demonstrating These Traits

1. Accepting a low salary without negotiating.
2. Staying in a job they dislike because it's "secure."
3. Not applying for a promotion unless they meet 100% of the criteria.
4. Avoiding starting a business because they fear failure.
5. Staying in unhealthy relationships because they think they can't do better.

6. Not speaking up in meetings even when they have good ideas.
 7. Choosing a "safe" major instead of one they're passionate about.
 8. Underpricing their services as a freelancer.
 9. Apologizing excessively for small things.
 10. Not asking for help because they don't want to "bother" others.
 11. Avoiding networking because they feel unworthy of connections.
 12. Saying "I'm not good at that" before trying.
 13. Turning down opportunities because they feel unprepared.
 14. Staying in their hometown because leaving feels too risky.
 15. Not setting boundaries with demanding people.
 16. Avoiding leadership roles due to fear of responsibility.
 17. Not investing money because they fear losing it.
 18. Choosing partners who don't treat them well.
 19. Not taking credit for their accomplishments.
 20. Settling for mediocre friendships.
 21. Avoiding public speaking even when it would help their career.
 22. Not dreaming big because they fear disappointment.
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6. 22-Point Guidelines to Reverse the "Penny Mindset"

1. Ask for more than you think you deserve — then grow into it.
2. Set goals that scare you a little.
3. Negotiate every opportunity.
4. Practice saying "I want..." without apology.
5. Upgrade your self-talk to match your potential.

6. Surround yourself with ambitious people.
 7. Track your wins weekly to reinforce self-worth.
 8. Replace "Can I?" with "How can I?"
 9. Take one small risk every day.
 10. Stop assuming rejection — let others say no.
 11. Treat your time as valuable.
 12. Raise your standards in relationships.
 13. Ask for feedback instead of fearing it.
 14. Say yes to opportunities before you feel ready.
 15. Invest in your skills and growth.
 16. Visualize the life you want in detail.
 17. Challenge beliefs that limit your earning or success.
 18. Practice receiving compliments without deflecting.
 19. Set boundaries that protect your energy.
 20. Celebrate ambition instead of hiding it.
 21. Choose goals based on desire, not fear.
 22. Remember: Life pays what you ask — so ask boldly.
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If you want, I can also create:

- A **visual summary**,
- A **worksheet**,
- A **self-assessment quiz**,
- Or a **step-by-step transformation plan** based on the poem.

Just tell me what direction you want to go.