

# Risks

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– Janet Rand

## About the Poem

Human life is full of risks. There is risk in what we say or do. If we walk, there is the risk to fall. If we talk there is the risk of displeasing someone. So risk is a part and parcel of our life. Risk-avoiding people may feel safe and comfortable for a time. But they can do nothing and achieve nothing for fear of bad results. To overcome this fear we need courage. Without taking risk, our talents remain useless. They perish. Man without development of his talents is like an animal. A risk-taking person is fearless and has undefeated courage.

## Stanzas, Word-Meanings and Explanation

**Stanza 1.** *To laugh is to risk appearing the fool,  
To weep is to risk appearing sentimental.  
To reach out for another is to risk involvement,  
To expose feelings is to risk exposing your true self.*

(Page 143)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** risk (noun) = a situation that could be dangerous or have a bad result; **to risk** = to put something valuable or important in a dangerous situation in which it could be lost or damaged; **appearing** = looking; **sentimental** = undesirably emotional; **to reach out** = to show somebody that you are interested in him and want to help him; **involvement** = taking active part or interest in something; **to expose (verb)** = to uncover something hidden, bring back to light; **feelings** = emotions; **true self** = real face.

## EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference** – These lines have been taken from the poem ‘Risks’ composed by Janet Rand.

**Context** – The poet says that there is risk in everything we do. Here he gives various examples of it.

**Explanation**–The poet says that man does not know that all his acts are full of risks. If he laughs, people may call him a fool. If he weeps, people may call him emotional. If he helps others people may doubt his good intentions. If we express our ideas and feelings, people will know our innerself. Thus, there is risk in what we do or say

**Stanza 2.** *To place ideas and dreams before a crowd is to risk being called naive.  
To love is to risk not being loved in return.  
To live is to risk dying,*

(Page 143)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** place = present; **ideas** = thoughts; **crowd** = a large number of people gathered at a place; **naive** = simple and inexperienced; **being called a naive** = one may be called simpleton; **not being loved in return** = one may not get love for love; **risk dying** = fear of death.

## EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference** – These lines have been taken from the poem ‘Risks’ composed by Janet Rand.

**Context** – In these inspiring lines, the poet describes that we cannot do anything without taking risk. If we want to do something, we shall have to take risk.

**Explanation** – According to the poet there is risk in what we do or say. If we tell the people our ideas and planning about our life, they may call us fool. They may opine that we have no experience of life. If we love a person, we may not get back the same love. Our life is full of dangers. At every step there is the risk of death.

**Stanza 3.** *To hope is to risk despair.  
To try is to risk failure.  
But risk must be taken, because the greatest hazard  
in life is to risk nothing.*

(Page 143)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** hope = to think of getting success; despair = hopelessness; failure = not getting success; hazard = peril, danger; to risk nothing = if we are not prepared to lose something.

## EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference** – These lines have been taken from the poem ‘Risks’ composed by Janet Rand.

**Context** – In these inspiring lines, the poet expresses his ideas that though there is risk in every walk of life, we must take risk.

**Explanation** – According to the poet our every hope does not come out true. Many hopes in life end in disappointment. We try and try to get success in life, but we meet failures too. In life, we gain and lose, we succeed and fail. Even then we take risk. Without taking risks life comes to a stop.

**Stanza 4.** *The person who risks nothing, does nothing, has nothing,  
is nothing, and becomes nothing.  
They may avoid suffering and sorrow, but they  
cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.*

(Page 143)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** avoid = to escape; suffering = distress, trouble; sorrow = sadness or grief; change = to reform; grow = develop.

## EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference** – These lines have been taken from the poem ‘Risks’ composed by Janet Rand.

**Context** – These lines reveal the truth that there is no achievement without taking risks.

**Explanation** – The poet says that the man who does not take risks cannot do anything. Such a man cannot get anything in his life. He cannot become anything in life. If he wants to do something, to have something or to become something, he will have to take risks.

The poet says that the people who do not take risks can escape from the sufferings and sorrows of life. But they cannot learn anything. They cannot feel anything new. They cannot change themselves or the world. They can make no development in life. They cannot love others. They cannot even live their lives well. All these things demand risks.

**Stanza 5.** *Chained by their certitude, they are slaves; they have  
forfeited their freedom.  
Only a person who risks is truly free.*

(Page 143)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** chained = bound in chains; certitude = feeling of certainty; slaves = people having no freedom; forfeited = lost; freedom = liberty; truly = in real sense.

### EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference** – These lines form the last stanza of the poem ‘Risks’ composed by Janet Rand.

**Context** – Risk-avoiding people become dumb-driven animals. They live a slave’s life.

**Explanation** – The people who do not take risks, become bound by a feeling of complete certainty. They become slaves to their own thoughts. They lose their freedom of thoughts and actions because they fear from doing anything new. In the end, the poet says that the person who takes risks is really free from all dangers. In the last line, the poet inspires us to take risks and face difficult situations in life.

### TEXTUAL QUESTIONS

#### ACTIVITY - 1

#### Comprehension

(A) **Tick the correct alternative :**

- What does the line ‘To hope is to risk despair’ express ?  
(a) fear about failure (b) fear about discouragement  
(c) fear about some losses (d) fear of being hopeless
- Who composed the poem “Risks” ?  
(a) Oliver Goldsmith (b) Charles Mackay  
(c) Janet Rand (d) Alfred Tennyson

**Ans.** 1. (d), 2. (c).

(B) **Answer the following questions not exceeding 30-40 words each :**

1. What is success ?

**Ans.** To get what we desire is called success. If we want to achieve success in our life, we should have the courage to take risk. Risk taking persons use all their manly powers to get success.

2. Who is truly free ?

**Ans.** The person who takes risks is truly free. The risk-avoiding person becomes a slave to his thoughts of safety. So risk-taking persons are free to think and act in their own way.

3. What is the greatest hazard in life ?

**Ans.** The greatest hazard in life is to risk nothing. Without taking risks, a man cannot do anything. Such a man can’t get anything in his life. He cannot become anything without taking risks.

4. When is a man filled with despair ?

**Ans.** A man is filled with despair when his hope is not fulfilled. To hope is to risk despair. When a man does not get the desired result of his work, he is filled with despair.

5. How can freedom be enjoyed ?

**Ans.** Life is full of challenges (risks). By taking risks or accepting these challenges, freedom can be enjoyed. We should not be afraid of sufferings and sorrows. We should have courage to express ourselves freely and act freely.

**(C) Answer the following questions not exceeding 60 words each :**

1. Why should we take risk ?

**Ans.** Without taking risks, all our attempts are useless. So we should be ready to undertake risks and face challenges at each and every step. One who does not undertake risks fails to move ahead. He does not make any progress in life.

2. What is immediate advantage of avoiding risks ?

**Ans.** Life is full of risks. Every human action has some risks. But people who avoid taking risks, have an immediate advantage. The advantage is that they may avoid sufferings and sorrows for a while happily. But ultimately they are losers because they cannot learn anything. They cannot achieve anything. They cannot love others. They cannot even live their life freely.

3. "Chained by their certitude". Explain this phrase.

**Ans.** This phrase refers to the people who are bound by their own feelings of certainty and safety. They are afraid of taking any risk in their lives. They are slaves to their own feelings. They know nothing about freedom. They are bound to their easy going life. They are scared of trying anything new.

4. Write the main theme of the poem.

**Ans.** Risk is an integral part of life—this is the main theme of the poem. There is some risk even in laughing, weeping, helping others, in expressing our feelings, sharing our dreams and ideas, loving others, in living, hoping, doing something, and in every thing. So it is very necessary to take risks in life. A person who avoids risks, may avoid sufferings and sorrows. But a life without risks is the greatest danger in itself.

5. What is the importance of opposite images in the poem ?

**Ans.** The poet has mentioned several opposite images in the poem like-laugh....fool, weep....sentimental, expose feelings....true-self, live....dying, hope....despair, try....failure etc. The importance of these opposite images is that these images express the possible risks or results in the concerned activities. These images express practical aspect of life and true nature of human beings.

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS



**Answer the following questions not exceeding 30–40 words each :**

**Q. 1. What is the fate of the man who risks nothing ?**

**Ans.** The man who risks nothing, can do nothing in life. He can have nothing. He can become nothing. He becomes unimportant in the society. Ultimately he loses freedom of his life.

**Q. 2. What benefits does the man get who takes risks in life ?**

*Or*

**What is the advantage of taking risks in life ?**

**Ans.** The man who takes risks learns new things, gains new experiences, changes his position, develops into an important person and lives life happily. In true sense he lives freely.

**Q. 3. What is the immediate advantage of avoiding risks ?**

**Ans.** The immediate advantage of avoiding risks is that a person is saved from suffering and difficulties for a short time. He doesn't have the fear of being hopeless, unsuccessful or being called fool, emotional, inexperienced etc.

**Q. 4. What is the long-term disadvantage of risking nothing ?**

**Ans.** The man who risks nothing, has to bear many disadvantages in the long run. He is unable to learn and feel. He cannot grow and develop his personality. He can neither love nor live happily.

**Q. 5. How are people restrained by their certitude ?**

**Ans.** People avoid to take risks fearing they will fail. This feeling of failure prevents them from taking risks. They do nothing and keep satisfied. Thus they are restrained by their certitude and become its slave.

**Q. 6. Six verbs have been piled up in the line 'cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live.' What does the poet emphasise using this device ?**

**Ans.** By piling up six verbs 'cannot learn, feel, change, grow, love, live' in the line, the poet has conveyed the intensity of his feelings on the great loss one bears by not taking risk in life.

**Q. 7. The same pattern, 'To laugh is....', 'To weep is .....', has been repeated nine times in the poem. What effect does this repetition create in the poem ?**

**Ans.** Such repetition has been used to give expression to strong feelings or firm belief. In this way the poet wants to convince the reader that no action in the world is free from risk and where there is no risk, there is no gain.

**Q. 8. Why has the poet repeated the word 'risk(s)' fourteen times (including the title) and 'nothing' six times in the poem ?**

**Ans.** The words 'risk(s)' and 'nothing' represent the central message of the poem. The whole poem revolves round the idea that nothing is risk free and no gain is possible without taking risks. That is why the poet has repeated these words.

**Q. 9. What are the risks in simple activities of man ?**

**Ans.** There are risks in simple activities of man. There is risk of being called a fool in laughing, an emotional in weeping, an involved in helping and an inexperienced in exposing feelings and ideas.

## ACTIVITY - 2



### Reference To Context

**Explain the following lines with reference to context :**

1. To live is ..... to risk nothing. (L-08-12) Stanza 3
2. The person who ..... grow, love, live. (L-13-17) Stanza 4

**Note :** For the above explanations read the explanation of stanza 3 and 4 given in the poem.



# My Good Right Hand

– C. Mackay

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## About the Poem

The poet highlights the pain of poverty. More painful is the hollow advice of the relatives. When the poet was in difficulties his false friends came to him. They only showed him lip-sympathy. They did not help him with money. At last the poet thought that expecting help from others was like building a house on the sand. The power of self confidence and self-help came to him. He worked hard and came out of the difficulties. God helps those who help themselves.

## Stanzas, Word-Meanings and Explanation

**Stanza 1.** *I fell into grief, and began to complain ;  
I looked for a friend, but I sought him in vain;  
Companions were shy, and acquaintance were cold ;  
They gave me good counsel, but dreaded their gold.*

(Page 146)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** fell into grief = was in sorrow; looked for = searched for; sought = tried to find; in vain = uselessly; companions = friends; were shy = did not want to help me; acquaintance = less known persons; cold = indifferent, unfriendly; counsel = advice; dreaded their gold = feared to help me with money.

## EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference :** These lines have been taken from the poem 'My Good Right Hand' composed by Charles Mackay.

**Context :** In these lines the poet describes his poor condition and the behaviour of his false friends and relatives.

**Explanation :** The poet describes his time when he was in deep sorrow and poverty. He talked about his poverty and difficulties to his friends and relatives and demanded for some help. He tried to find out a helpful friend. But he did not find a faithful fellow. His so called friends were not willing to help him with money. His familiar fellows showed no interest in helping him. They had no sympathy for him. They all gave him advice but did not help him with money.

**Stanza 2.** *"Let them go," I exclaimed : "I've a friend at my side,  
To lift me, and aid me, whatever betide.  
To trust to the world is to build on the sand :  
I'll trust but in heaven and my good Right Hand"*

(Page 146)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** exclaimed = said with surprise; at my side = with me; lift me = to make me cheerful and happier; aid = help; whatever betide = come what may, what so ever may happen; trust = have deep faith; the world = others; to build on sand = to make a building on a weak foundation; heaven = (here) God, almighty; good Right Hand = work with my own effort/self-confidence.

## EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference :** This stanza has been taken from the poem 'My Good Right Hand' composed by Charles Mackay.

**Context :** The poet feels sorry for believing his flattering friends. He leaves them aside and decides to work hard with faith in God.

**Explanation :** The poet's self confidence and zeal for hard work came back. Now he did not care for his flattering friends. He felt a new energy of self help. He became confident that by his hard work he would remove his poverty. He now felt that self-help and self confidence are man's most faithful friends. To expect help from others is like building a house on weak foundation.

**Stanza 3.** *My courage revived, in my fortune's despite ,  
And my hand was as strong as my spirit was light ;  
It raised me from sorrow, it saved me from pain;  
It fed me, and clad me, again and again.*

(Page 146)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** *courage* = inner power to fight against difficulties; *revived* = was restored, came back; *in my fortune's despite* = in spite of my bad luck; *spirit* = mood; *light* = cheerful; *raised* = lifted; *saved* = sheltered me against suffering; *pain* = sufferings; *fed* = gave food to eat; *clad* = dressed; *again and again* = repeatedly, (whenever I was in difficulties).

## EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference :** These lines have been taken from the poem 'My Good Right Hand' composed by Charles Mackay.

**Context :** The poet wants to give a message through these lines that our hard work gives us everything – food, clothes, cheerfulness and satisfaction.

**Explanation :** When nobody helped the poet in his poverty, he decided to trust God and his hard work. Though his luck was bad yet his courage came back. Then he worked hard and felt his hand very strong and his mood very cheerful. He worked hard day and night. His sorrows and sufferings vanished. He became happy. His hard work gave him good food to eat and good clothes to wear. Self help and self confidence made him a happy man.

**Stanza 4.** *The friends who had left me came back every one,  
And darkest advisers looked bright as the Sun;  
I need them no more, as they all understand,  
I thank thee, I trust thee, my good Right Hand!*

(Page 146)

**WORD-MEANINGS :** *darkest* = formerly the least helpful; *advisers* = people who gave advice to the poet in his difficult days; *looked bright* = looked cheerful; *thee* = you (God); *trust* = have firm; *my good Right Hand* = my own effort/self confidence.

## EXPLANATION WITH REFERENCE TO CONTEXT

**Reference :** This is the last stanza of the poem 'My Good Right Hand' composed by Charles Mackay.

**Context :** The poet here thanks God and his own hands that brought back his happy days.

**Explanation :** The poet worked hard and became a happy man. Now he could buy all his needs. All the faithless friends and relatives began to come back in his good days. The unhelpful advisers were now cheerful to share his joys. All those faithless friends and fellows knew that



the poet did not need them now. In the last line the poet thanks God and his self-confidence for his prosperity.

### TEXTUAL QUESTIONS

#### ACTIVITY - 1



#### Comprehension

**(A) Tick the correct alternative :**

1. What is the meaning of word "sought"?  
 (a) sadness                      (b) tried to find                      (c) advice                      (d) without success
2. "Let them go" : the word "them" here refers to :  
 (a) God the Almighty      (b) enemies                      (c) friends                      (d) None of these

**Ans.** 1. (b), 2. (c).

**(B) Answer the following questions each in 30-40 words :**

1. Why did poet fall into grief ?

**Ans.** The poet fell into grief because of his poverty. His sorrow deepened when all his friends left him all alone. He couldn't find even a single friend who could help him out of his poverty.

2. Why did the poet's search for a friend prove to be fruitless ?

**Ans.** It proved fruitless because all his (poet's) friends were false and faithless. He searched for such a friend who could help him with money. But none of them was willing to help him.

3. Who is the friend that could help and make the poet happy ?

**Ans.** The poet says that whatever happens, there is a friend who will always help him and make him happy. That friend is God and the poet's self-help.

4. Why did the poet feel disappointed ?

**Ans.** The poet was in deep sorrow due to his poverty. Seeing him in miserable condition, all his friends left him. He looked for a true friend who could help him but he failed. So, he felt disappointed.

5. What was the result of the poet's hard work ?

**Ans.** The result of the poet's hard work was that he came out of his sorrow and pain which was due to his poverty. He got food and clothes. Now he became rich. He learnt to be self dependent.

**(C) Answer the following questions each in 60 words :**

1. How did the poet overcome his sadness ?

**Ans.** The poet gathered courage in himself. He decided firmly to believe in God and his own hard work. Thus by working hard he became a happy man. His hard work proved his true friend.

2. Why does the poet not need the friends anymore ?

**Ans.** When the poet was in deep poverty, nobody helped him. Due to his hard work, he became rich. Now those friends started coming back to him. But now the poet doesn't need those fair-weather friends anymore.



3. What inspiration do we get from the poem ?

**Ans.** The poem inspires us to believe in God and in our own hard work. The poem encourages us to work hard. It also teaches us to stay away from false friends. A true friend is one who firmly stands with us in our difficulties. We can overcome our sorrow and pain by working hard, as the poet did. Our hard work is our true friend who will never leave us.

4. What does the “ Good Right Hand” represent ?

**Ans.** The ‘Good Right Hand’ represents the poet’s own hard work and self-confidence. During the poet’s difficult time all his friends left him all alone. Nobody helped him. Then his faith in God and self-help made him rich.

5. Which are the two things that the poet puts his trust in ? Explain.

**Ans.** The two things that the poet puts his trust in are God and his own hard work. It is because only two things-God and his own hard work helped him in his difficult time.

### ADDITIONAL QUESTIONS



**Answer the following questions 30–40 words each :**

1. Why did the poet’s companions and acquaintances feel unwilling to lend him money?

**Ans.** The poet was poor. His companions and acquaintances feared that he would not pay back the debts. So they did not lend him money. They were selfish people.

2. What is ‘to trust to the world’ compared with?

**Ans.** ‘To trust to the world’ is compared here with ‘to build houses on sand’. Such buildings have weak foundation so they must fall very soon. In the same way trusting the other people for help is foolish.

3. Why were the advisers who were the least helpful earlier now ready to associate with the poet ?

**Ans.** The advisers who were the least helpful earlier were now ready to associate with the poet because he was enjoying a prosperous and happy life now. They wanted to enjoy his riches.

4. Why does the poet not need the friends any more?

**Ans.** The poet does not need the friends any more because they were false friends. They did not help him in his poverty. Moreover, now he has found two trusted friends-God and his own two hands to labour with.

5. Whom does the poet thank for the change in his life?

**Ans.** The poet thanks his good Right Hand for the change in his life. Only his hard work, made his life prosperous and happy. His hard work has proved his best friend. Self confidence and self-help never leave us alone.

6. Quote the instances of the repetition of words and patterns in the poem. What effect does the use of repetition have on the poem?

**Ans.** The word ‘again’ is repeated in line 12 and ‘thee’ in line 16 of the poem. Similarly

repetition pattern is seen in line 11, “It raised me from sorrow, it saved me from pain.” The use of such repetitions adds to the beauty and melody of the poem.

7. Find the instances of alliteration in the poem. What effect does the use of alliteration ‘produce on the poem?’

**Ans.** In this poem, the instances of alliteration in the words are ‘strong, spirit, sorrow, saved’ in lines 10 and 11. They make a rhythmic continuity in the poem and make it all the more beautiful.

## ACTIVITY - 2



### Reference To Context

Explain the following lines with reference to context :

1. My courage revived ..... again and again. (Stanza 3.)
2. The friends who ..... good Right Hand. (Stanza 4.)

**Ans.** For the above explanations read the explanation of stanza 3 and stanza 4.

