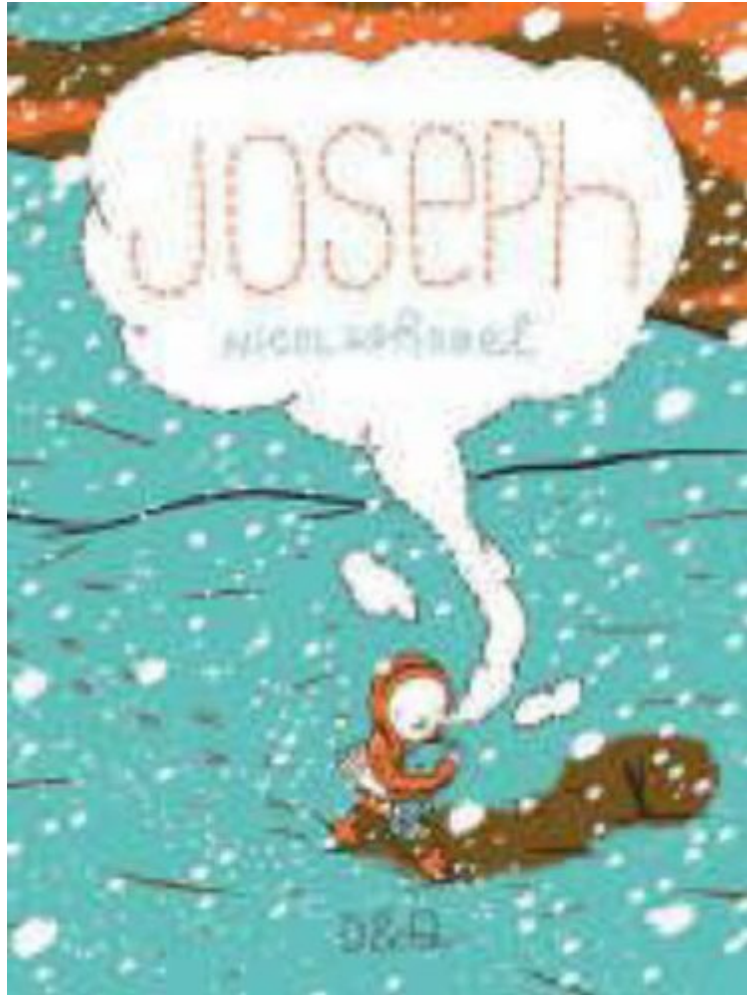


Joseph

Nicholas Robel

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Nicholas Robel : Joseph before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised Joseph:

Joseph is another fantastical tale from surrealist master Nicolas Robel. A little boy with enormous hands and an overactive imagination copes with indifferent parents, teasing schoolmates, and troubling dreams. Returning to themes explored in *Fallen Angel* his first book from D+Q's *Petits Livres* series Robel captures the wonders and traumas of childhood in a short narrative that is as emotionally sincere as it is cryptic, while deftly melding the corporeal with the imaginary in his signature simple yet highly evocative style.

From School Library Journal Grade 10 Up Joseph lives in a world of existential angst filled with dark, shadowy, Jungian-like demons. His attempts at finding purpose, meaning, or self-identity fail as he is demoralized by his parents, other adults, and even his school-yard peers. The child's attempts at self-realization seem futile as he stumbles along in a dark, cold, and dreary world with no one to turn to except perhaps a hideous centipede that he befriends and brings home, where it is stepped on by his ever-oppressive parents. Joseph also has huge awkward hands that are forever spilling ink bottles on floors and wreaking uncontrollable havoc. He attempts to cut them off or squeeze them into small gloves to no remedy. Although the author intends Joseph to appear misunderstood by a callous adult world, he never allows his character to acquire cunning, insight, or tenacity. The boy's gullibility may not resonate with mature, self-realized teens, but those less self-assured will be happy to find someone even more ungainly than themselves. Joseph's final humiliation, getting run over by a car in the last panel (leaving tire tracks across his back and giant hands), may come across as darkly comic to younger adolescents who are themselves unready for a serious representation of childhood loneliness and despair. Robel's simply scrawled drawings and heavy, crayon-textured shadows are contrasted against an innocence-evoking third color aqua lending a childlike quality to the book's design. Jodi Mitchell, Berkeley Public Library, CA Copyright Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved. About the Author Nicolas Robel is a Geneva-based cartoonist, graphic designer, and publisher of B.L.b Comix, who was born in Quebec in 1974.