

What impression do you form of Joseph Richard Barclay?

The young student Gervase Phinn meets, Joseph Richard Barclay intrigues Phinn as he calls Joseph his companion which shows Phinn's interest in Joseph and his respect towards him as if he was a grown up. We are also impressed by the fact Joseph introduces himself like a grown up by shaking Phinn's hand.

The fact that Joseph speaks in an old-fashioned manner and uses sophisticated words like "Perished" and "skirmished" is unusual for an eleven-year-old which gives us the impression that he is not ordinary like the rest of his classmates. Joseph's language is inappropriate for a boy of his age; he not only speaks in an outdated and mature way but his language is more like a teacher's way of speaking as he says he has to "collect the register" like a teacher does. Also, he uses old phrases like "hale and hearty" and "ship-shape" which shows he is organised, speaks oddly, and he is behind his times, and the fact that he is the only child that does not speak the Dale dialect indicates his uniqueness and his inferiority over the other children.

Additionally, the repetition of the word old-fashioned shows Phinn's curiosity in Joseph and emphasises how different Joseph is compared to the other children and how he is dressed as a 1950s school boy and stands out from the rest. The way he dresses reflects the manner of speech and his behaviour which are also behind the times as is the way he dresses. The greyness of Joseph's clothes portrays his character which is sombre and conservative, unlike a boy of his age; also, we don't normally associate grey clothes with a child due to the darkness of the colour and because we normally think of bright clothes for children.

Joseph is a serious child and when Phinn says that Joseph is "quite the expert" as a joke, Joseph takes it literally and "nodded seriously" which makes us wonder if he has any sense of humour. Unlike the other children, Joseph stays in at break time tidying up the library, which we don't expect for a boy of his age, which adds to his peculiarity. Moreover, he wrote an account of the school's history, which is atypical for a boy of his age to be intrigued in such a thing while the rest of the children of his age are more playful and would not do such a thing just for the fun of it. "Miss precious precocious pupil" is very adult-like for his age; Phinn's usage of alliteration here and the triple plosive is rhythmical and nearly a rhyme, which emphasises his unique intelligence as a child and the strong impact Joseph has on Phinn.

Joseph not only speaks like a teacher but also is as intelligent as one, Joseph's knowledge of the school's history is vast and Miss Precious herself says that he "has more history in his little finger than [she has in her] entire head". He knows a lot about the history of the school and of the moor and is very intellectual because he reads a lot of books which expands his knowledge of York's history as well as correcting the teacher when she says that the commanders didn't take their pets into battle. Even Miss Precious says that "he is a very unusual little boy" and asks advice from the inspector about his education which highlights that he is very odd indeed if his teacher asks advice and says that her own pupil is strange. Furthermore he does not socialise with the other children but is not shy and is forward when he speaks to the inspector.

On the whole we see that Joseph is very odd indeed and isn't an average boy of his age as he does not play with the rest of the children and acts very adult like, we notice that he does not have any friends and does not interact with the other children and prefers to spend his break in the class which is peculiar for an eleven year old.