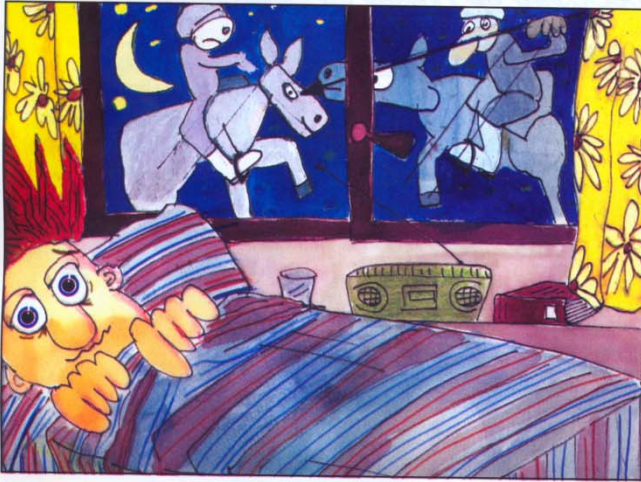


At Aula 2008 (Madrid) we organized a composition competition for secondary school students. Here is the winning entry:



"Ah... Don't worry" he said to me. "That was a battle. 150 years ago, they fought to conquer these lands. But they lost and some nights they come back to conquer these lands. They lost these lands when they were alive; however, they think that they can conquer them now that they are dead". He stopped. "I don't know what they are exactly: ghosts? Maybe. My imagination and yours? Who knows?"

At first I thought that the man was crazy — like me — but eventually³ I thought, why can't the dead come back to recover their lands?

While I was eating, I was thinking about the horseman's story. It was fantastical and unreal. Nevertheless, I liked to think that I saw something that was true.

The Lost Lands

by *Mónica Marrón Fernández*

Many years ago, my family and I went to Villablino (León). We were on holiday. I was very excited: I had never been to Villablino. It was great fun.

My little sister and I played a lot. That day, I was very tired. I slept fast. But I woke up soon; it was still dark. I looked out of the window. Suddenly, I saw horses and there were men fighting. The horses ran away, frightened. But the men went on fighting. I closed my eyes, scared, and then I opened them. The men and the horses had disappeared. I was frightened. What was happening?

The next day, I asked my sister if she had heard anything the previous night. "No, why?" she answered me. "Are you OK?" I thought that I was crazy but... That was

impossible... it was so real. I heard men and horses fighting! I was sure!

I saw a person going for a walk. I couldn't take it anymore². I asked the man if there were horses there.

"There were horses before. But it has been a long time since Villablino had horses. It's very cold, so people took the horses far away from here. Why? Do you want to ride a horse?" he asked me.

"No" I said. "Last night, I heard horses and men fighting".

The next weekend, I came back to Madrid. I didn't want to go to Madrid. I wanted to listen to the rest of the horseman's story. But my family didn't allow⁴ me to do it. I had to return to Madrid.

When I was in the car, I looked out of the window and, suddenly, I saw a horse and a man on a hill nearby⁵. He smiled at me, and then he vanished. I don't know if what I saw was true or not, but I know what I saw and I know that the story was true. ■

• **Runners-Up⁶:** *Xinzhon Mao and Enrique Prieto Prieto*

• **A Honourable Mention to: (in alphabetical order)**

*Aída Cuervo Rosillo
Álvaro Emilio Díez Moreno
Carolina Marcos Ribera
Cristian Sirbu
Daniel Riado Minguez
Elena García
Elena Sánchez Arribas
Estrella Hernández Jiménez
Henar Vallez Delgado
Jessica Vivas*

*José Juan Calderón Viedma
Laura Sevilleja Gómez
Lorena Basterrechea Mayoral
M^o Eva Nieto Piñero
M^o Josefa González Castañé
Patricia Martínez Ovejero
Paula Nacenta Mendivil
Raquel Domínguez Machío
Sara Arrayás
Sara Cruz Trujillo*

¹ entry — (in this context) submission; contestant; composition

² I couldn't take it anymore — I could no longer control myself, I had had enough

³ eventually — (false friend) in the end

⁴ to allow — permit

⁵ nearby — close-by, in the vicinity

⁶ runner-up — competitor in (equal) second place

