

THE BAN ON WORMS

TEXT BY DE ERIKA ZEPEDA

ILLUSTRATIONS BY JUAN JOSÉ COLSA





Photo by Juan M. Frusto

ERIKA ZEPEDA was born in Guadalajara, Jalisco. She studied Hispanic Literature and Education at the University of Guadalajara. Young storyteller who has always been very close to the world of art and children. She has collaborated in various newspaper supplements and cultural magazines. She has also been a reading animator and promoter of children's and young people's literature. In 2004 she won the National Children's Short Story Award Juan de la Cabada (INBA) with the book *Historias galliniles* (Patria, 2006). Her book *Una zarigüeya en mi mochila* (SM) received an honorable mention in the Barco de Vapor Award in 2009, and she won this award in 2016 for her work *Instrucciones para convertirse en pirata* (SM). In 2013 she won the FONCA's Young Creators scholarship in the novel category, and in 2016 she received the Julio Torri National Short Story Award with the book *63 señoritas condenadas a la desolación* (Tierra Adentro). In 2017 she published a children's theater book *Ánimas, que ya amanezca* (Panamericana) and in 2018 the funny work *Se va y se corre... ¡Lotería!* (Planeta), about Mexican traditions.

THE BAN
ON WORMS

Instituto Nacional Electoral

President Councilor

Lcda. Guadalupe Taddei Zavala

Electoral Councilors

Mtro. Arturo Castillo Loza

Norma Irene De La Cruz Magaña

Dr. Uuc-kib Espadas Ancona

Mtro. José Martín Fernando Faz Mora

Carla Astrid Humphrey Jordan

Mtra. Rita Bell López Vences

Mtro. Jorge Montaña Ventura

Mtra. Dania Paola Ravel Cuevas

Mtro. Jaime Rivera Velázquez

Mtra. Beatriz Claudia Zavala Pérez

Executive Secretary

Dra. Claudia Arlett Espino

Head of Internal Comptrollership Office

Mtro. Víctor Hugo Carvente Contreras

Acting Executive Director of Electoral

Training and Civic Education

Lcda. Iliana Araceli Hernández Gómez

THE BAN ON WORMS

First edition in English, 2026

Original title in Spanish: LA PROHIBICIÓN DE LAS LOMBRICES

Text: Erika Marcela Zepeda Montañez

Illustration: Juan José Colsa Gómez

Translator: Varinia del Ángel Muñoz

Copyright © 2026, Instituto Nacional Electoral

Viaducto Tlalpan núm. 100, esquina Periférico Sur,

col. Arenal Tepepan, 14610, Ciudad de México

ISBN complete electronic work in English: 978-607-8870-87-5

ISBN electronic volume in English: 978-607-2604-56-8

Free dissemination. No sale allowed.

THE BAN ON WORMS

Text by Erika Zepeda
Illustrations by Juan José Colsa

For all the Rominas who want to be scientists.

For all the Pablos who want to be dancers.

PRESENTATION

The Ban on Worms is another volume in the **Árbol** collection that the Instituto Nacional Electoral (INE, National Electoral Institute) offers to children throughout the country, with the purpose of encouraging the joy of reading, influencing their formation as citizens, and spreading democratic values.

This book is part of the Estrategia Nacional de Cultura Cívica 2017-2023 (National Civic Culture Strategy 2017-2023), which seeks to strengthen our civic lifestyle, recognizing the need to establish the appropriate environment for citizens to own the public arena and become the main actors in democratic life.

Other than the home, school is where we learn to interact with our peers on a daily basis. This entertaining story narrates a situation that could happen in any classroom and sparks a conversation about different ways of thinking and acting, for both men and women.

This tale offers readers a chance to enjoy how the words of Erika Zepeda and the images of Juan José Colsa interact with each other in a story where we are invited to reimagine ourselves, not as individuals of a certain gender, but as human beings with preferences, knowledge, needs, and desires; sometimes similar and other times different, but in the end all legitimate and respectable.

Although this story can interest people of any age, it is specifically directed at elementary level students. It offers young people and their families the opportunity to reflect on the way we interact daily and to analyze behaviors that we often mimic, sometimes unconsciously and other times following social conventions we inherited long ago.

Above all, this book is an invitation to joyful reading and an opportunity for family bonding. The final pages include a discussion guide aimed at adults, allowing parents and teachers to accompany children in a reflection about gender equality, as well as the equal rights that all Mexicans have and the conviction that we can build a more just, equitable, and empathetic society.

No Girls Allowed on this Side of the Classroom

“Girls never get their hands muddy looking for worms, and that’s a fact! They don’t classify them either and I don’t even think they know what they are,” Pablo shouted indignantly, as if the search for worms were the most important thing in the world.

“And where did you get that rule from?”

As Romina asked this, she still held her hand up high, displaying the jar full of slimy, sticky worms she had shown his classmate at recess.

“Well, my mom told me so.”

The girl didn’t seem convinced, but she didn’t want to argue; the teacher would appear at any moment now, and if she caught her fighting, she might lower her grade.

“What if we vote on it?” Lucrecia, Romina’s best friend, said.

“Let’s vote!” everyone shouted.

The election, which was organized after another ten minutes of arguing about the way each person would cast their vote, resulted in a tie, which brought them back to the beginning of the argument. And that’s when the problems began: kids throwing balls of crumpled paper at each other, others arguing with their neighbor, and yet others jumping on and off the chairs, throwing their notebooks up in the air, and some even mocking and making rude gestures at the girls.

“What is going on?” asked Miss Rosita as she appeared in the doorway, still drowsy after the nap she had taken during recess after enjoying her coffee and muffin.

“We were voting!”



“Voting about what?” the teacher asked, intrigued.

“To decide whether worms searching and collecting is just for boys!”

“It’s for girls, too!” a voice piped up.

The yelling could be heard all the way to the playground, it seemed that the classroom would explode and that in a few minutes they would face the dreaded visit of the principal.



“Silence! Given this behavior and the fact that you can’t even reach an agreement about holding an election and abiding by the results, I decree that starting today you will be seated separately: boys on the right and girls on the left. This way we will avoid fights and so much chaos.”

Everyone fell silent because nobody really knew what “decree” meant.



“What does that mean?” asked Lucrecia.

So, the teacher wrote the word on the blackboard and explained:

“‘Decree’ means that what I say goes and nobody can think otherwise.”

“No, teacher!”

“Now!” ordered Miss Rosita with her hands on her hips, as she always stood when she was angry.



So everyone in the classroom started moving around, some carrying their backpacks, others throwing their books towards the last row, and many taking everything, including their favorite chair. There were yells, gesticulations, some mocking smiles, paper planes, the squeak of chairs being dragged over a floor covered with colored pencils, and bits of paper, as each student made their way through their classmates in search of their new place.

“Ready?”



The move took a while longer, some girls argued about the arrangement of the chairs, a couple of boys were already taking a nap, and someone was looking out the window at a dog that had sneaked into the playground.

“Ready?”

When they finally managed the separation, some students chorused:

“Rea-dy, Miss Ro-si-ta.”

“But what about the worms?”

“We’re done with the subject of worms. And to inform parents of the new rules, I will post an announcement at the school entrance.”

“The ban on worms!” said Lucretia, very softly.

Romina glanced over at the other side of the room and locked eyes with Pablo, who was grinning broadly, as if to say: “I told you so, worms aren’t for girls”, although secretly he was a bit worried about math class.

Who could he copy from if he wasn’t seated next to her?





“Now, take out your math books.”

So, girls and boys, each on their own side of the room, followed the teacher’s instructions, taking care, of course, to avoid touching those on the other side and even trying to ignore them. However, this proved quite difficult.

“This is much better,” a girl in the last row declared.

“Better than what?”

“Like this, without boys. When we’re together everything stinks.”

“I know! They’re really dirty. Do you think they ever take a bath?”

All the girls agreed, completely forgetting that after P.E., followed by recess, everyone, both boys and girls, stank up the room.



Even Miss Rosita opened all the windows so she wouldn't faint from the stench filling every corner of the room.

"This is much better, so much better," said a boy in the first row.

"Better?"

"Yeah, they're such... such... crybabies."

"Total crybabies," they said, but not so confidently, remembering the time they watched a movie in the library, that one with the toys, and several boys left the room with red eyes from crying so much. No one was able to eat their popcorn or continue with the day's activities, and they even had to call parents to come in and give them some emergency hugs.

Worms at Recess

Let's rewind a little.

It all started during recess, as many school stories do. The situation was this: 4th grade girls standing on one side with an expression of “I don't believe you, I don't believe you”, and on the other side, boys from the same grade with faces that expressed “I don't care; I don't care.” Some kids from other grades watched the argument as they ate their lunches.

“I know more about worms than you!” Romina shouted, holding up a jar full of worms who were happily eating a rotten apple.

“What would a girl know about worms!” Pablo shot back, gripping a folded piece of paper full of worms about to fall back into the mud.

“They don't know anything! They find it disgusting to touch them! They don't dare to catch them!” the other boys jeered behind him.

“Of course I do, I even have them classified and everything.”

Romina pulled out a notebook, that one that she carried everywhere and where she wrote down everything she was interested in. She flipped through the pages, taking time to read carefully: “Record speed of snails”, “Kite flying”, “Mud pies”, “Mushrooms that look like umbrellas”, until she found the section on “Classification of worms.”

“Here: read and educate yourself, as Miss Rosita says.”

CLASIFICACIÓN DE LOMBRICES

COLOR-TEXTURA:
rojizas-labosas, blancas-
labosas, negras-labosas.

FORMA: medio ovaladas,
redonditas, retorcidas,
con aros gruesos en
la piel (debe ser un
misterio científico
dónde están sus ojos y
laca).

COMIDAS FAVORITAS:
hojas, raíces, restos de
comida, ñal vez pastel?

TAMAÑO: siete
centímetros, tamaño
pulsera, mini, extra
largas, más grandes
que un calcetín.

**LUGARES EN DONDE SE
HAN LOCALIZADO:** patio
de la escuela, parque,
macetas y dice mi
mamá que en los
estómagos de los que
no se lavan las manos,
isera verda





The boys were very impressed. They knew that Romina was very fussy about her notes, but this was going overboard; truth be told, they just liked to play in the mud to find the ickiest worms and use them to play jokes on their friends.

“See? I know more about worms than you!”

Pablo thought for a moment. Worms really didn’t interest him that much; he only played with them because at recess almost all his friends did, and it was on the list of things boys do (according to his dad). He would have preferred to use that time for other activities he was more interested in, like dancing. But just to annoy her, he kept arguing with Romina.

“That doesn’t convince me and I’ll prove you wrong.”

“Oh, yeah?”

“Yeah, grabbing worms is a boy thing. Can’t you see that we have to get all muddy to catch them?”

“I also got all muddy and nothing happened to me!”

“Can’t you see that we hide them in backpacks and use them to play tricks on each other?”

“That’s all?”

“Can’t you see that they’re all slimy and everyone is too grossed out to touch them?”

“It’s a boy thing!” confirmed some of the kids.

The pastime of hunting worms had become popular: a lot of boys carried their jars around, with holes in the top so the worms could breathe. They put them inside and fed them; they competed over who had caught the most or who had found a different species.

“Well, they don’t disgust me, I like to observe them and see how they live. And who says it’s a boy thing, anyway?”

They all began to rack their brains and looked at each other. Who or when was it decided that getting all muddy was just for boys? Who said that girls didn’t like disgusting stuff like collecting worms or frogs?



“Well, I think there must be a law..”

“A law?”

“Of course, it must exist somewhere.”

“Where, where does it say that it’s forbidden? Because I always pay attention in class and nobody’s ever said that.”

Again, everyone get quiet as they tried to think of some law to back them up. Maybe there was even a special day, like those they celebrate all the time at school, something like: “National Day of Gross Things, Only for Boys”, “Only for Boys Day”, or something like that.

“Well, I don’t know, I’m going to ask my dad. He’s always telling me about things that only boys can do and things only girls can do.”

“Like what?”

“Like, only men know how to fix machines, women don’t have the ability to do that.”

“Say what? My mom always fixes the washing machine,” said Romina.

“My aunt Lupita is a robotics engineer,” Lucrecia announced.

“And my mom is chief mechanic at a big car company!” Paco immediately added.

“OK, OK, but everyone knows that only women know how to cook,” Pablo replied, very sure of himself.

“Well, my dad always makes my sandwich every morning and my cousin is a chef!” Paco piped up again.

“I’ve never tasted better *chilaquiles* than those my brother makes,” Romina chimed in again.

Pablo was running out of options; he couldn’t come up with a real activity that was just for boys or girls.

“Are you still thinking?” asked Romina.



The truth is that Romina was kind of stuck up because her grades were the best in the whole school district and she was on the honor roll almost every bimester. She also had that secret craving to classify and analyze absolutely everything, just like the science textbook said scientists do. Yes, this girl dreamt of being another Marie Curie. Was it possible for her, Romina Hernández, from Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez Public School, to also win two Nobel prizes, just like Madame Curie? Yes, everyone believed that Romina would become a scientist, there was no doubt in anyone's mind; although she still didn't know whether she would classify galaxies or plants or worms, she'd decide that later.

“Look...”

But just then the bell rang, announcing the end of recess and they all had to head back to the classroom to continue their argument.





More Prohibitions

Another day at school.

Some students still ran in. It was obvious that they had woken up late and hadn't even had a chance to wash their faces or even remove the sleep from their eyes. As they entered, they saw a huge poster that announced:

NEW RULES FOR ALL THE SCHOOL

1. Girls are strictly forbidden from participating in activities that have to do with worms or other gross creatures.
2. Boys must enter the classroom (and the school) on the right and girls on the left.

They immediately suspected who had written the announcement and, although they looked at each other for a moment, intrigued, they managed to split up quickly so each group could enter according to their assigned side. Romina with her beady eyes and shrill voice on one side, and on the other Pablo, with his little smirk and his new notebook where he planned to write classifications like: "The best dancers in history", or "My best dance moves" or "Invention of a new dance."

NIÑOS

NIÑAS



Of course, this division also applied when it was time to line up, and then they saw that the prohibition had been extended to include the whole school. Boys and girls, all separate.

“Good morning!” the teacher greeted the class when everyone was in their seat.

“Good mor-ning, Miss Ro-si-ta!” they chanted.

“How did you do with the math homework? Did anyone get the answer?”

Suddenly, Pablo remembered the homework he hadn't done and racked his mind for a way to get out of this situation.

“Teacher.”

“Yes? I'm listening.”

“If collecting worms isn't for girls, then a lot of sports wouldn't be appropriate for them because they'd get dirty while playing. Right, teacher?”

“What if we also vote on it?”

Miss Rosita hesitated and thought for a minute; she seemed to be planning something. Then, between clenched teeth that seemed to squeak like the chairs being dragged around the day before, she announced:

“No more voting! You might all end up in an uproar like yesterday. I'll just go ahead and decree that, from now on, sports are not suitable for girls. Imagine if they were not only to get dirty, but also hurt.”

Everyone started to imagine this, but all they could remember was the time the P.E. teacher slid into base playing baseball and broke his ankle. What's with the idea that only girls get hurt?

“Not even gymnastics? Nobody gets dirty there.”

The teacher considered this calmly, and before Romina could begin to speak up with more arguments or a classification of sports, she announced loudly and clearly:

“No sports! What if someone fell and scraped their knees and then the parents would come to complain? Therefore, sports are forbidden for girls.”





The truth is that some of the girls were happy, no more running around under the sun and smelling horrible! But at the same time, others felt it was a low blow. Did this mean there would be no more camping trips by the river? No more participation in relay races? What would they do instead of P.E.?

“And will the boys still play sports?” asked Paco, who had never liked that class and would escape to the library at the smallest opportunity, enjoying his favorite section, marine animals, far away from sports and the races that made him a little dizzy.

“Yes, boys will continue playing sports.”

“And what about games during recess?”

“That’s right! I hereby decree that you may not chase each other all over the place. Girls, I will request a special area for you, where you may only play with dolls.”

“But teacher! We also want to play jump rope, races, hopscotch or tag, and sometimes even marbles.”

“No more of this ‘teacher!’ thing. I’m going to ask the janitor right away to set up a restricted area just for girls.”

“And don’t we get a special area?” asked Pablo.

“A special place for boys? What an absurd idea! Now, did anyone bring their math homework?”



And, in fact, at recess the girls were faced with a restricted area. It was a corner marked off with yellow tape, the kind that police sometimes use, and a sign that read “GIRLS HERE.” And they all had to gather there: those girls who did like to play with dolls were very happy that they were no longer run over by distracted students but those

who liked to participate in races, play jump rope or soccer had a terrible time. There wasn't enough room to play those games so they resigned themselves to just sitting and watching the boys chasing each other around the rest of the space.





NIÑAS

Surely, at least a few boys would have liked to come over to talk with the girls over lunch, but they didn't dare cross into the restricted zone. It seemed really boring. Awful! Terrible! Horrifying! What could be worse than this?



Things Get Ridiculous

JOSEFA ORTIZ DE DOMÍNGUEZ
PUBLIC SCHOOL
7:55 A.M.

Flocks of uniformed and somewhat disheveled boys rush towards school. There, too, go the girls, carrying their backpacks, some with enormous bows in their hair and others sporting the hairdo their pillow had fashioned.

“Run, Pablo, you’re late!”

“I’m going, Dad, I’m going!”

You see, most students always have a grown up or older sibling that leaves them at the school entrance: women wearing heels and carrying briefcases full of unfinished business, men wearing bathrobes or sweatpants, grandfathers with the newspaper folded under their arms, grandmothers with shopping bags, and older siblings that would then head off to their own schools.

“You heard me, Pablo! I don’t want any more complaints from the principal about your behavior. And you better be top of the honor roll. How is it that a girl is in first place?”

“But, Dad...”

“A boy should be in that spot, and I specifically mean you. And that’s final.”

Even though Pablo wasn’t so sure anymore about what his dad said, he preferred to remain silent. He didn’t have the courage to tell him that he really didn’t want to be on the honor roll; that his dream was to become a famous dancer, one of those you see on TV.

“Bye, and get lots of A’s!”





CUADRO
DE
HONOR



CAMPE



Students and their relatives stopped at the school gates to say goodbye. Few of them paid any attention to the notice teacher Rosita had put up days ago and that now sported many more restrictions than before:

NEW SCHOOL RULES

3. Girls will not be allowed to participate in P.E. class.
4. Girls can only play with dolls at recess.
5. Girls have a separate space to play during recess.
6. Girls are not allowed to roller skate.
7. Girls are not allowed to eat lime popsicles.

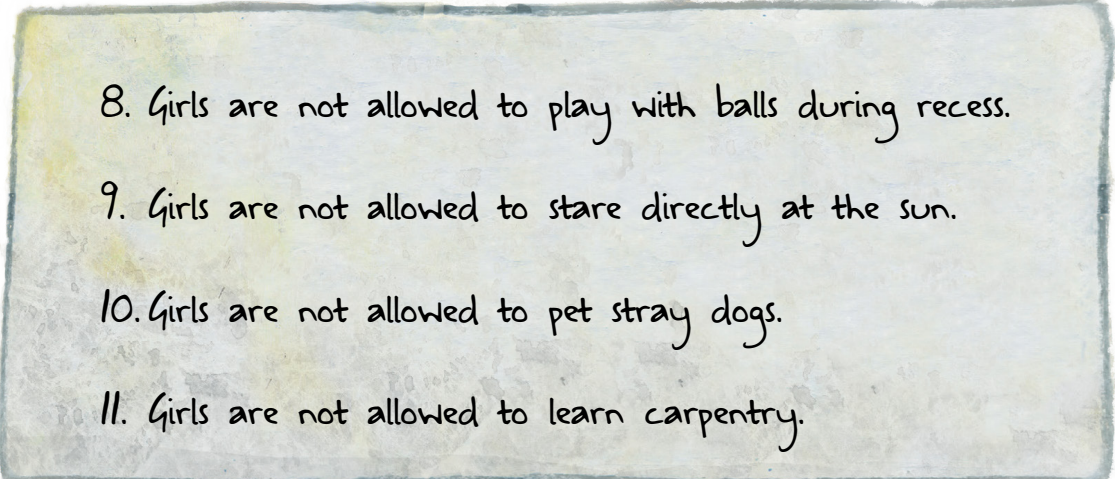
Girls and boys from all grades read the prohibitions carefully and Romina wrote them down in her special notebook because she didn't want her grades to drop and be removed from the honor roll.

“What’s all this?” asked the few grown-ups that noticed the poster. But among them, some were grandparents who couldn't see well without their bifocals and others were cousins who hadn't let go of their cell phones for a second as they texted.

However, nobody could discuss this with Miss Rosita, who managed to slip into school just as the bell rang and the *Marcha de Zacatecas* began to play over the loudspeakers.

“Attention! Line up! Take your distance!”

Every day the list grew and grew; the posters had taken over half the wall, the one where they used to post pictures and the honor roll, and where the picture of a smiling Romina showed up almost every month. Now the rules prohibited all sorts of things:

- 
8. Girls are not allowed to play with balls during recess.
 9. Girls are not allowed to stare directly at the sun.
 10. Girls are not allowed to pet stray dogs.
 11. Girls are not allowed to learn carpentry.

By now the girls had begun to suspect that soon there wouldn't be any activity for them to participate in, and the boys began to get bored at not being able to play with them. Also, Pablo was worried about his math homework. Did this mean he couldn't ask Romina to help him anymore with difficult topics like fractions? They couldn't do projects together anymore, either, and the boys had to work twice as hard. Nobody understood what was happening: a restricted area at recess, a divided classroom, no sports for girls. What was next?

No Girls Allowed!

Everyone knows that the worst things happen on Mondays, it's like an invisible pact between time and space to complicate our lives, especially those of children who don't do their homework and don't realize it until Sunday night.

So, anyway, the worst happened on a Monday at Josefa Ortiz de Domínguez Public School; although some had begun to suspect this would happen, nobody did anything to stop it. And it was only when the students, accompanied by their grandparents, mothers, fathers, and cousins, arrived at the school gate that they discovered what had happened. Romina had done her homework and wasn't worried at all this Monday, she walked next to her mom, who was talking on the cell phone and using weird words like *deficit*, *stock market*, and *investors*, but when the two of them reached the school doors they found a crowd of people that didn't let them through.

“What now?”

And then they discovered what this Monday had devised for them, the last rule on the list:







78. Girls are forbidden from entering this school.

And all the girls and female teachers, Miss Rosita among them, stood there reading this over and over without understanding what it meant.

“I’ll pick you up at the end of the day,” yelled Romina’s mother who, along with the rest of the grown-ups, were rushing on to their own activities (although some only headed home to sleep a bit more).

“So, does this mean we won’t have classes anymore? But today was the day we were going to talk about space travel and we were even going to interview Julieta Fierro on the phone,” mourned Romina, who already had a section of notes about “Mexican astronomer women I admire” in her notebook.

“There won’t be any classes for us?” asked Lucrecia.

But Miss Rosita wasn’t listening, she took a deep breath, walked to the door and removed all the posters; then she went into the school, and all those who had remained outside followed her.

“Attention! Line up! Take your distance!”

She asked the P.E. teacher for the microphone, who had taken charge of the school since the female principal wasn’t allowed in. Only a few boys had lined up and listened attentively to the instructions.

“Stop!” the teacher cried.

“Let the teacher speak! Let the teacher speak!”

“This is ridiculous! What have we come to? Do you prefer having absurd rules imposed by others rather than coming to an agreement? Are you really happy with this?”

Nobody seemed to want to answer Miss Rosita's question.

“Do you understand that all of this can be avoided if you learn to negotiate and respect each other? Stop assuming that some things aren't for boys and others aren't for girls! It's only fair for girls and boys to have the same opportunities to learn about all subjects and do whatever activities they want: sports, science, math, dance... Equality for boys and girls! What do you think?”

The schoolyard, filled with students and teachers, was in complete silence; maybe they were thinking about what the teacher had said, but they couldn't answer. All you could hear was the voice of someone standing at the school's entrance:



“What if we vote on it?” yelled Lucrecia so everyone could hear her.

“Who votes for keeping the ban on worms?”

Nobody raised their hand.

“Who votes for eliminating the ban on worms?”

Everyone in the schoolyard raised their hands.



“Attention! We hereby announce that the ‘ban on worms’ is abolished. Both girls and boys may participate equally in hunting for frogs and worms, playing football or any sport they want, studying science or dance, everyone can play house if they want, and, of course, boys and girls have the same right to enter the school building.

Romina was overjoyed to learn she could now play during recess or collect worms to study them, and now everyone could participate in both sports and science. To be honest, even Pablo was comforted by the thought that Romina could help him a bit in the math exam; now he could focus on his true interests and grow up to be a great dancer, maybe even gather enough courage to tell his dad.



Later, when the final bell rang, boys and girls rushed out the front door together. Next to the honor roll they saw the new sign:

ANNOUNCEMENT

**IT IS STRICTLY FORBIDDEN
TO HAVE DIFFERENT RULES FOR BOYS AND GIRLS.**

THIS APPLIES TO THIS SCHOOL AND ALL THE WORLD.



TO REFLECT
AND DISCUSS

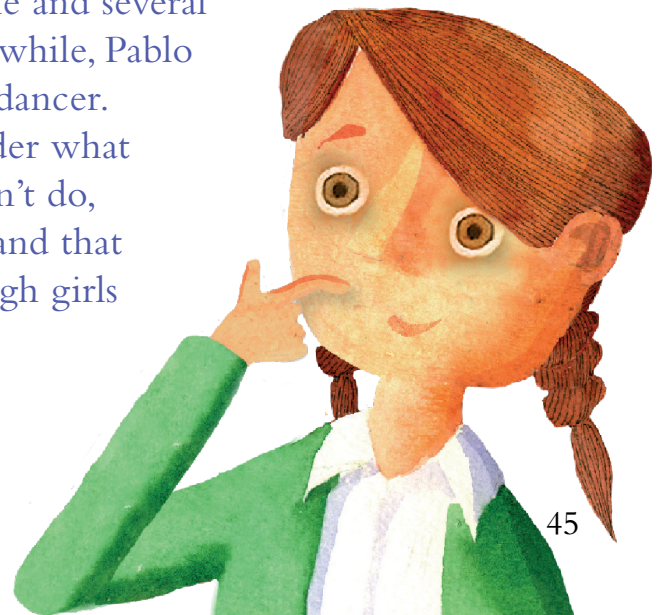


Women and Men: Equal Rights

This story is an example of the gender roles that are seen in family environments and society as a whole. A literary approach, sometimes using a farcical or ironic tone, is an educational prompt to help children to reflect on a topic. This section offers parents and teachers some analytical tools to facilitate having a conversation with young readers.

Historically, our societies have developed the concept of masculinity as linked to creation, science, and logic, whereas femininity is seen as something marginal and less important, often linked to uncontrollable emotions. These beliefs persist in all areas of our society, although nowhere is it written as a rule or law.

That is why Pablo says that girls don't hunt for worms or study them because they would have to get dirty; although this isn't written anywhere, he believes it is an unshakable rule because his father told him so. Also, although the boys say that girls are crybabies, they remember the day they watched a sad movie and several of them ended up with tears in their eyes. Meanwhile, Pablo doesn't dare tell his father that he wants to be a dancer. These everyday examples lead children to consider what they have been told that girls and boys do or don't do, according to the most common social practices and that result in real limitations for both genders, although girls are usually affected more.



Based on the biological and psychological characteristics that women have related to motherhood, it has been unjustifiably argued that there are activities that come more “naturally” for women and others where men are the only ones that can do the job. This definition usually comes with overtones of the superiority of men and inferiority of women.

The children exchange opinions based on references within their own families: if only women cook, how is it that Romina’s brother makes such good *chilaquiles* or that Paco has a cousin who is a chef and that his father makes his sandwich every morning? On the other hand, why does Romina’s mother fix the washing machine if women are no good at mechanical repairs? Why is Paco’s mother a chief mechanic at a car company? These examples provide an opportunity to reflect and talk about traditional gender roles and how they are slowly changing.

Article 4 of the Mexican Constitution says, “Men and women are equal before the law. It will protect the organization and development of the family.” In this same vein, **Article 1** says, “All discrimination is forbidden based on... gender...”

Therefore, the rules in this story could not have been upheld indefinitely: a restricted area for girls, prohibiting their free use of the whole schoolyard, and the ban on playing ball or roller skating. It would be like thinking that Mexican laws prohibit women from moving freely through certain areas.

Article 3 of the Mexican Constitution rules that it is the responsibility of the State to provide education for all and that “Boys and girls have the right to having their needs met: food, education, and healthy recreation that will fulfill their integral development.”



As the end of the story says, things get ridiculous when you can't even imagine girls being able to learn carpentry and up to the point where the prohibitions become so extreme that they aren't even allowed into the school; Pablo's father's opinion that a boy, not a girl, should be top of the honor role is also unacceptable: or to limit the right of recreation by mandating that girls can only play with dolls. In Mexico, education is a right for all, and nobody, under any circumstance, can deny girls this privilege. At the end of the story, Miss Rosita explains that there are no research topics that cannot be studied by boys and girls equally.

Article 34 establishes that "Citizens of the Republic are men and women..." This means that both have all the rights to participate in the political and democratic life of the country. **Article 35** specifies that all citizens, men and women, have the right to "Vote in elections... and stand as candidates for all publicly elected positions."

At the end of the story, the participation of girls and boys in an election, carried out in an orderly fashion for the first time, results in the dissolution of the absurd prohibitions that the class had been enduring. This is a clear example of how the democratic life of any social group flourishes and a more amicable coexistence is achieved through the enthusiastic and accountable participation of both men and women.





THE BAN ON WORMS

The Bembo Std font family was used.



JUAN JOSÉ COLSA was born in Mexico City. He studied architecture and postgraduate studies at the School of Architecture at UNAM, where he has also worked as a teacher. He has recently dedicated to editorial design and illustration of children's and youth books for several publishers (SM, Castillo, Porrúa, Norma, Planeta) and public institutions such as the SEP. He has participated in more than fifteen books as an illustrator and collaborates in UNAM's monthly popular science magazine *¿Cómo Ves?* He was included in the *Diccionario de ilustradores iberoamericanos* (CILELIJ 2013) and was a speaker at the IX International Congress on Designing for Humanity at the Anáhuac University. His graphic work has been exhibited both individually and collectively in several galleries.



The Ban on Worms is a fun story that puts us in front of the mirror to look at ourselves in everyday situations that reflect an ideology, often inherited, about the role that men and women play in our society.

With this book, the **Árbol** collection seeks to encourage both children and adults to reflect on stereotypes and behaviors, sometimes reproduced without realizing it, that affect our daily lives.

As in other books in this collection, with the purpose of contributing to the civic culture of the children, the central concepts on gender equity are taken up at the end so that adults can share the reading with the little ones and, in addition to entertaining them, contribute to the construction of fairer and more equitable social relations.