

# Efrén Divided Book by Ernesto Cisneros

## Points for discussion and questions for chapter 5-8

### Chapter 5:

Venn diagrams, math worksheets, class tasks, and article annotations were the least of Efrén's worries. But at the same time, his mouth sour and stomach tightened at the thought of not completing his assignments.

Efrén knew "Mr. Garrett wouldn't understand" ~ **How important is it for educators to demonstrate flexibility when it comes to school assignments and work regardless of circumstances students may be facing?**

Efrén knew so much more about Mr. Garrett than Mr. Garrett knew about Efrén.

**What are some opportunities you provide for students to share about their experiences and personal lives? How important is to you to learn about your students' family, culture, & experiences?**

Because Efrén feared getting in trouble for not having his homework - he had his best friend make a "phony note" (fake parent note) but he couldn't use it because of the integrity his parents had modeled for him.

**Family integrity, honesty and hard work is the education his family had engraved in Efrén's heart. Would you consider this "family engagement"?**

Regardless of his current situation, Efrén did his best to "stay focused" ~ **What could be a sign we should be aware of that our students are "not all in" school work because of personal situations?**

Efrén wanted to entirely focus on education (reading) and just enjoy Amá's cooking but he had to take care of his siblings. **How could we support students who are having to balance school and home responsibilities?**

On page 66 we see Efrén trying to explaining to his younger sisters what was going on with Amá ---- Efrén is in a very hard situation where he is forced to think and act like an adult. **How does this early maturity and**



**resilience be used in our classrooms to demonstrate others strengths and weaknesses?**

Efrén read to his siblings for over an hour --- This demonstrates the importance of having books available in our students' homes. **How do you go about providing students with the appropriate number of books at home as well as books that represent their identity?**

Bilingualism is so important and we see how Efrén uses his bilingualism to understand his parent's conversations and not feel like an outsider. **How can we encourage our families to maintain home language at home? How can we reinforce our students home language at school?**

Worries Efrén had every night and thoughts that filled his mind and ripped a hole in his heart:

Where could Amá be? Was she hurt? Was she scared? Would she ever be coming back?

Even though his mind was so busy with all these thoughts and it was too much for Efrén to handle, he "PUSHED HIMSELF UP"! The strength and persistent attitude Efrén demonstrate is honorable. **How do we encourage our students to embrace the thought that their lived experiences and circumstances can be used as encouragement to stand tall and strong?**

Efrén needed to hear his dad's permission to let go and cry. He needed a moment of vulnerability while having to stand tall and strong.

**Mental health is so important. What resources should our students know about at school and community to help them cope with family issues?**

## Chapter 6:

Is the 4th night and Efrén is caring for his siblings. He does a lot for them so they would not miss Amá -- horsey rides, pushing them on swings, coloring, playing hide and seek, reading.

Even after Efrén providing the kids all this support, Mia and Max began to act out. Separating children from their parents is cruel. Little children need to be with their parents. **What training or understanding should school staff have to better deal with students facing family separation?**

When Efrén sees that his “world is falling apart” - he begins to intentionally see things the way mother would see it. He’s no longer allowed to be the Efrén he had always been but is forced to begin thinking as an adult and make critical choices as an adult would. Efrén worried about what to make for dinner - he worried about having enough money to buy food!

**Should students be put in positions and responsibilities that are meant for adults? Should young children be thinking about what to make for dinner? Or How to run a family budge?**

Efrén marked his lateness to class as “unexcused” even though he really had a valid excused for being late to class. **How can we encourage our students to see their experiences and journeys as important as they are? How can we help them see that their experiences matter and we care for them?**

Efrén is encouraged by his parents not to share with teachers any of the families’ immigration status. **Should school personal be aware of students and their families’ immigration status? Why or why not? How do we go about gaining families trust to learn our families’ journey and immigrant experience?**

On pg. 75, Efrén “rushes through the lessons on account of Max and Mia” ~ **Here we see Efrén in compliance with the school assignment but is he really learning? What do we do when students are not ‘all in’ with school work & learning?**

## Chapter 7: 5th night!

Efrén tries to do some homework after putting his brother and sister to bed. He daydreams about a different/better future. However, he is convincing himself that he does NOT deserve the life he's thinking.

**In what ways can we as educators or adults in English language learners' lives can encourage them to brake any cycles and change the narrative through education?**

Amá brighten the children's entire world. Once Amá was gone - not only everything began falling apart, but also Efrén began to highlight his small place and the condition they were living in :(

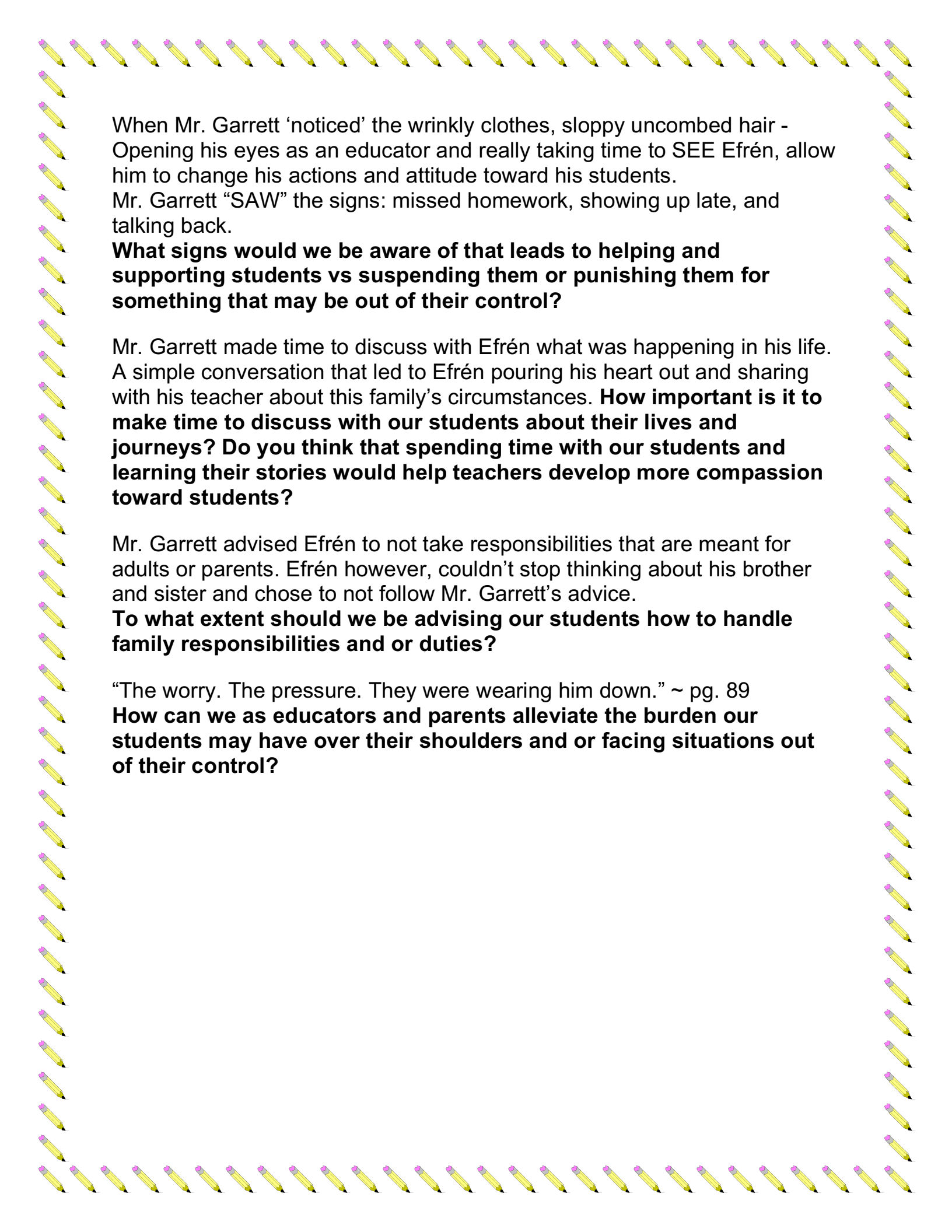
**How important is to encourage our students to see how a current situation does not determine their final destination? How do we help them see where they want to be vs where they are without devaluing family cultural values?**

Efrén school assignment reminded him of his mother -- while he should've been thinking about this performance he was thinking about his circumstance. **Are we being aware of assignment that may be hurting our students by reliving painful circumstances and reliving trauma? How carefully are we analyzing our lessons to ensure we are not offending our students' background and family cultural values?**

Apá worked day and night to not just put bread on the table for Efrén and his brother and sister but also to put money together to bring Amá back to the USA. **What support, tools, resources would you think your students might need if they find themselves in the situation Efrén is in?**

Mr. Garrett confronted Efrén in front of the entire class. Efrén's "blood boiled" - Efrén blurred out that Mr. Garrett did not care about him or his circumstances. **What can educators do to demonstrate students that they do matter and that their lives and circumstances matter and are worth of attention?**





When Mr. Garrett ‘noticed’ the wrinkly clothes, sloppy uncombed hair - Opening his eyes as an educator and really taking time to SEE Efrén, allow him to change his actions and attitude toward his students.

Mr. Garrett “SAW” the signs: missed homework, showing up late, and talking back.

**What signs would we be aware of that leads to helping and supporting students vs suspending them or punishing them for something that may be out of their control?**

Mr. Garrett made time to discuss with Efrén what was happening in his life. A simple conversation that led to Efrén pouring his heart out and sharing with his teacher about this family’s circumstances. **How important is it to make time to discuss with our students about their lives and journeys? Do you think that spending time with our students and learning their stories would help teachers develop more compassion toward students?**

Mr. Garrett advised Efrén to not take responsibilities that are meant for adults or parents. Efrén however, couldn’t stop thinking about his brother and sister and chose to not follow Mr. Garrett’s advice.

**To what extent should we be advising our students how to handle family responsibilities and or duties?**

“The worry. The pressure. They were wearing him down.” ~ pg. 89

**How can we as educators and parents alleviate the burden our students may have over their shoulders and or facing situations out of their control?**

## Chapter 8:

Efrén began bringing leftover school lunch to feed his little brother and sister. This brought shame to him.

**How careful are we when sending groceries home with our students? Could our intentions to support our students and their families be causing shame on our students?**

Mía didn't want to talk to Amá over the phone. We can see that this little girl began to feel anger against his mother but in reality, she was mad about the situation...not her mother.

**What school personnel should be involved in this in a situation where children begin to act out because of the circumstances there are living? How should we as educators handle this situation?**

When Efrén tried to explain the situation to Mía, she didn't understand what "immigration" or ICE was - she did, however, understand the phrase "La Migra" ~

Dr. Ibram wrote:

**"I must use the language of the culture to express the culture" ~**

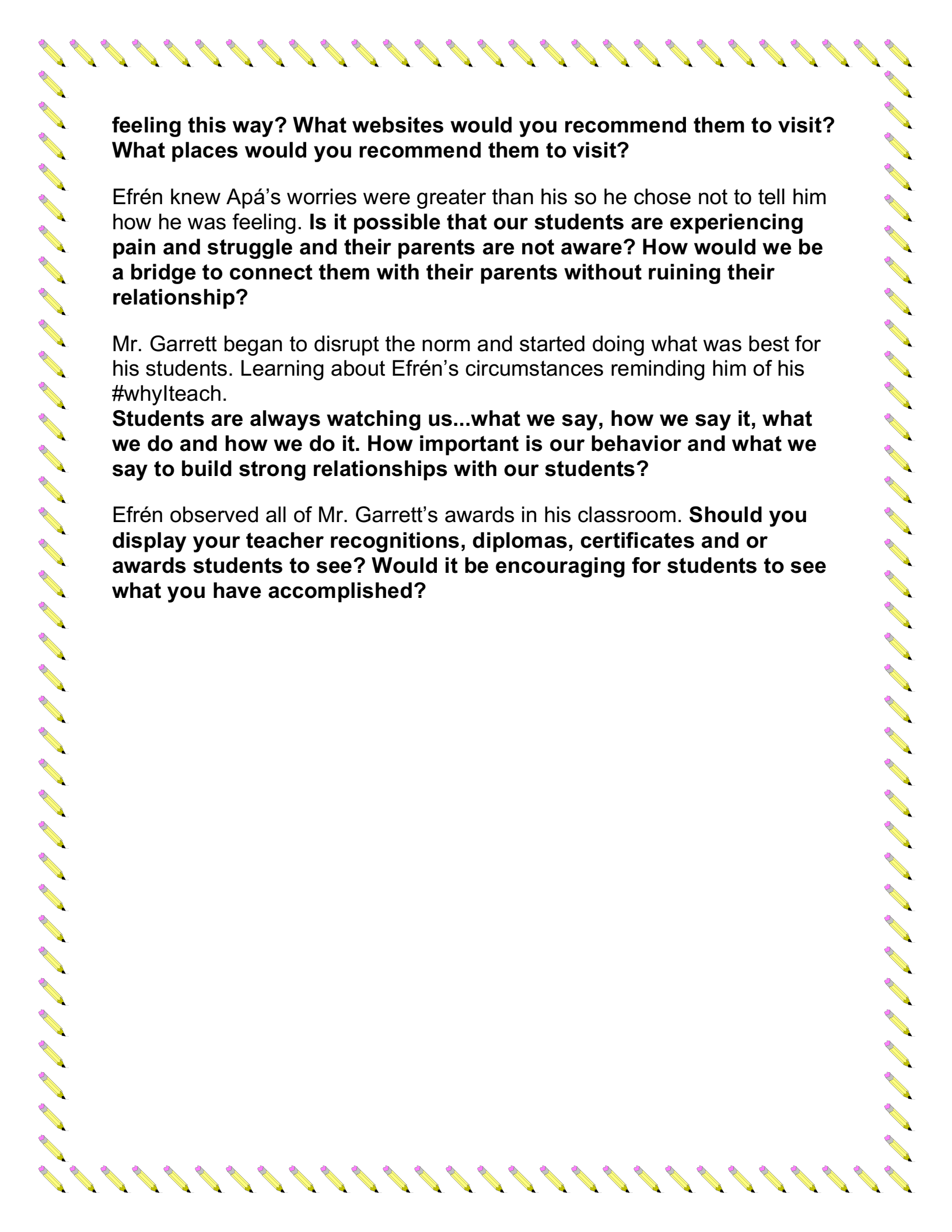
**In what ways could we allow our students to use the language of the culture to express their culture? Do we hinder students by not letting them use the language of the culture they've been taught?**

Efrén uses the picture book *Sneetches* by Dr. Seuss to explain a complicated concept to a little girl.

**What picture books have you used in your classroom or at home with your children to explain and explore difficult topics to talk about? Why use picture books to initiate conversations on topics with urgency among our students?**

Efrén knew that his mom and dad were up against an entire country who wanted them gone. **How are we demonstrating our students that we stand for them regardless of their documentation status and how are we standing for them?**

By the 6th night Efrén was too tired. Too unmotivated to do his school assignments. **What books would you recommend a young student**



**feeling this way? What websites would you recommend them to visit?  
What places would you recommend them to visit?**

Efrén knew Apá's worries were greater than his so he chose not to tell him how he was feeling. **Is it possible that our students are experiencing pain and struggle and their parents are not aware? How would we be a bridge to connect them with their parents without ruining their relationship?**

Mr. Garrett began to disrupt the norm and started doing what was best for his students. Learning about Efrén's circumstances reminding him of his #whylteach.

**Students are always watching us...what we say, how we say it, what we do and how we do it. How important is our behavior and what we say to build strong relationships with our students?**

Efrén observed all of Mr. Garrett's awards in his classroom. **Should you display your teacher recognitions, diplomas, certificates and or awards students to see? Would it be encouraging for students to see what you have accomplished?**