

Efrén Divided Book

by Ernesto Cisneros

Points for discussion and questions for chapter 9-13

Chapter 9:

While Efrén was busy helping David with his presidential election - his mind was occupied and he was able to get his mind off of his home situation.

How important is it for our students to participate in afterschool activities and/or extracurricular activities? How can we encourage them to participate and engage in extracurricular activities?

Efrén and David were very good friends. This friendship really helped Efrén during a very difficult time in his personal life.

Our students need peer interaction. It helps them get their mind off of circumstances they might be going through. **What opportunities are we creating to promote student-to-student friendships and interactions that are not necessarily centered on the curriculum?**

“My Amá got deported. Four simple words.” **Why are these words so hard for some students to share and say? Why do these 4 simple words carry so much hurt?**

Efrén appreciated that David never pitied him for being poor. As educators, we might know students like Efrén who sleep on mattresses on the floor, use secondhand clothes, and own secondhand toys.

How careful should we be when trying to support our students who live in a low-socioeconomic environment without pitting their lives and situation? Should be acknowledged their situation at all?

Chapter 10:

The scene about Jennifer dropping to her knees pleading to the immigration agents for her mother is heartbreaking. The scene reminded me of the viral image of Elian Gonzales crying while her mother was being detained.

What does this image evoke in you when you see it?



Jennifer wanted to be the president because she knew that this position could bring more attention to the immigrant situation going around their town. She wanted to raise awareness and “create a support group to help families.”

How can we encourage our students to stand as advocates and use their voice to bring awareness to the topics that matter to them and their families and communities? What groups could we initiate on campus that would encourage students to participate in advocacy groups?

¡Somos semillitas! We are seeds. This was all Efrén need to see to be encouraged to stand up and take courage to create change.

How important is it for our classroom decor to reflect words of engagement for our students to see? In what ways can we have our students see that their experiences CAN make a difference?

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When Efrén found out that immigration had taken Jennifer, he quickly began researching what detention centers for children looked like. What he found SHOOK him.

How important is it to tell children the truth about current situations? Should we continue keeping children (our students) in the dark and let them find the truth on their own or should we take responsibility to shine a light of truth on our children’s path?

When Efrén learned about the way kids were being kept in a detention center, “he couldn’t sit around to do NOTHING.”

Our children NEED to be engaged in today’s current events. Knowing the truth and seeing it for themselves encourages them to act.

What activities have you done in your classroom that takes your students beyond reading about a topic? How important is it for students to act and stand up for what they believe is right? How do we support them?

Efrén said: “My parents gave up everything for me. I need to do something for them.” Just like Efrén, we have students who are shooting for the stars, not for themselves but to honor their parents who sacrificed everything for them.

Tell a story of a current or former student whose achievements and goals have been accredited to their immigrant parents! #StoriesMatter

Efrén was in a big mess: *Amá was gone. *Apá was killing himself working extra. *Jennifer was gone. *Efrén's friendship with David was over. Our children, our students, have difficult circumstances in their lives. **How do we validate their struggles and what do we do to validate the stress of their feeling because of their situations?**

Apá had a "special entrance melody"! -- this reminded me of my grandfather. He would also whistle at the door and that's how I knew he was home :(

Efrén wasn't embarrassed to share that his mother had been deported. He was embarrassed to break down and cry about his situation.

The signs Mia and Max made for Efrén demonstrate how much they appreciate everything he was doing for them.

Chapter 11:

When Efrén found the school cleaned and ready for the week after, he felt like he was at home. It reminded him of his Amá.

How can we make out school buildings as comfortable as possible to provide a sense of belonging and ensure students feel at home?

Efrén brought home the picture book: 'Oh the Places You'll Go!'

Why would this title seem appropriate for what he was preparing to do? How can we use picture books to encourage our students to act? What picture books would you use in your classroom to encourage your students to stand up for themselves and their families?

"I can do it!" These are the exact words Efrén told his dad. Efrén was willing to risk his life to help his father bring his mother back to the USA.

Unaccompanied minors who cross over the border risking their lives just to help their families how they leave behind. Validating immigrant journeys is so important.

Chapter 12:

When Efrén crosses over the border into Tijuana, Mexico - he is advised to "act like you belong." - Even though our students may speak their home language and have different cultural backgrounds - their home is here in the USA.

How difficult would it be for our born in the USA students to have to go to their heritage home country and go to school and grow up in a country where they don't really belong?

Lalo, a taxi driver who was deported after living in the USA for 28 years, said: "There (the USA), she can make something of herself - be someone."

Why is it so difficult for individuals to make something of themselves while living in their home country? What opportunities are lacking or are not made available to "be someone"?

Efrén was, for just a few hours, on "La tierra de los Olvidados" (the land of the forgotten) in Mexico.

How is this like being here in the USA for certain groups of people? The lack of certain essentials makes them feel like they are in the land of the forgotten. How do we make sure our students do not feel like they are forgotten?

Chapter 13:

Efrén felt like a tourist in his parent's country. All the cultural artifacts fascinated him and caught his attention.

How are we reaffirming and strengthening our students' heritage and validating their families' backgrounds?

"...sea of brown skin. The range was huge, an entire color swatch of different shades." Diversity matters. Having a diverse environment and an inclusive environment matter. Color skin recognition and acceptance matters.

When decorating our rooms, are we being inclusive and including all shades of skin and color?

Walking around the streets of Mexico, watching children selling hand-crafted goods, and using the restroom in Mexico made Efrén appreciate the little bit he has here in the USA.

Have you ever traveled to another country and experienced the privilege of living here in the USA? Share your experiences with us!