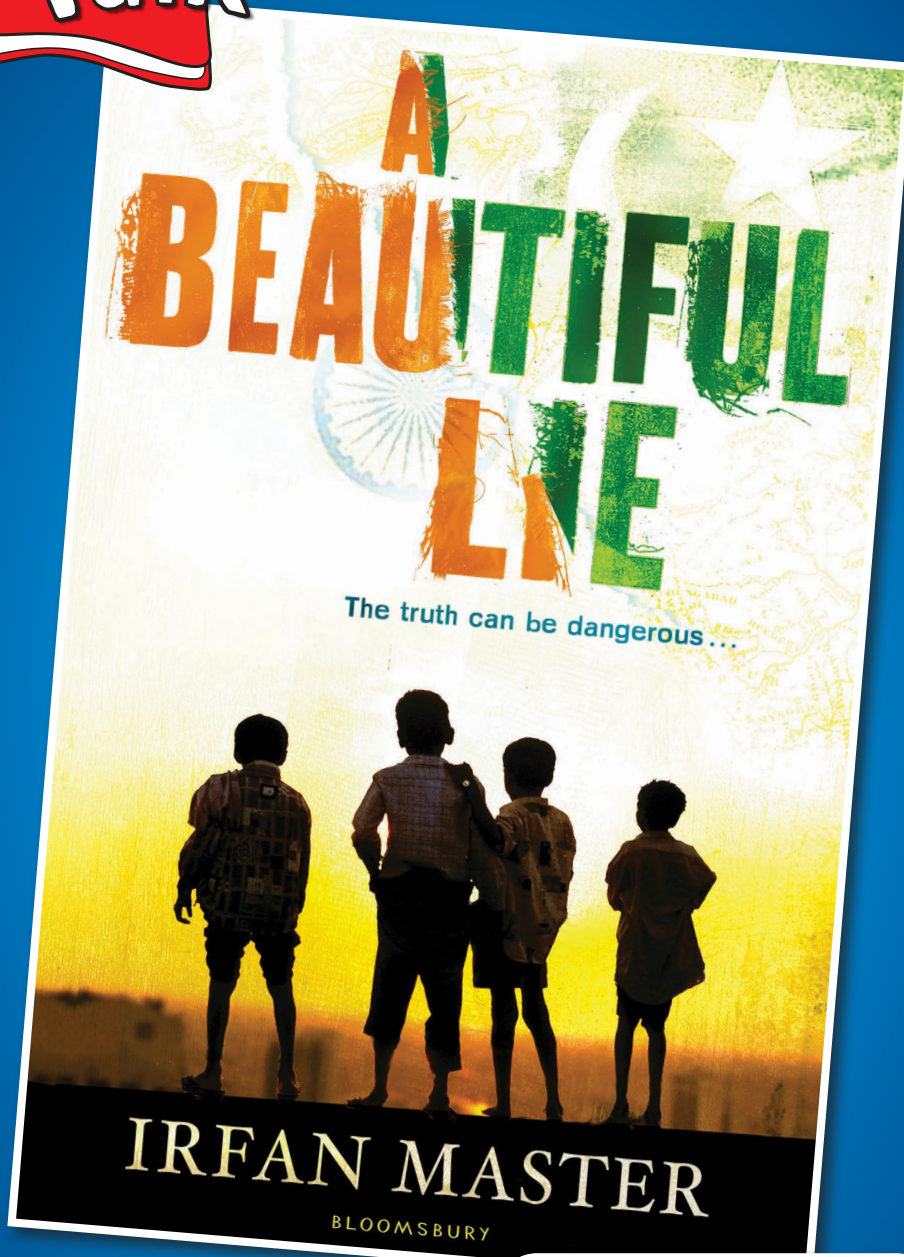




 SCHOLASTIC

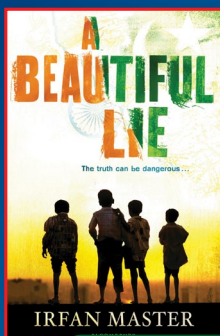
Book Talk



AGES 8+

**Engage and inspire your
pupils with a Book Talk!**

AGES 8+



Look out for this
book at your Fair!

Price	£6.99
Case	Read On
Author	Irfan Master
Publisher	Bloomsbury

Using this book in your classroom

Themes

This book gives an insight into what life was like for a Muslim family **in India at the time of Partition** (1947). There are many strong themes in the book, including **family love and loyalty**, whether it is **ever right to tell lies**, and how far a person should go to **protect a loved one**.

Summary

It is 1947, and in the run-up to Partition, there is more and more conflict between Hindus, Muslims and Sikhs in India. Even in the small market town where Bilal lives, there is increasing violence between the different religious groups, who had once lived so peacefully together. Bilal is a boy who has many friends, including Hindus and Sikhs as well as fellow Muslims. However, he has a lot to worry about – and not just because of the troubled times he is living in. His father (Bapuji) is desperately ill with cancer, and does not have long to live. Bapuji is totally dedicated to the idea of a united India where people from all religious groups can live together. Now that Bapuji is so ill, Bilal is determined not to upset him, and decides to keep him safe from any knowledge of the growing violence that surrounds them. And so, to protect his Bapuji, Bilal begins to lie about what is happening...

It doesn't take long before Bilal realizes that his lie is becoming more and more complicated. To keep the truth from Bapuji, he needs to enlist the help of his friends, his schoolmaster, and even the local printer who prints a one-off newspaper for Bapuji with Bilal's version of events! And yet, through his loving efforts, Bilal manages to ensure that Bapuji never finds out the truth of what is happening to India. Bapuji dies believing his beloved India is still united.

Bilal is torn by guilt, and doubts whether he has done the right thing in keeping the truth from his father. But a bittersweet postscript makes it clear that Bilal's lie, and his love for his father, were not in vain.

Did you know?

- *A Beautiful Lie* is Irfan Master's first novel.
- As well as being a writer, Irfan Master is the Sports Stories Project Manager at the National Literacy Trust, working in particular on a project called 'Reading the Game', which aims to use football to promote literacy and get young sports fans reading.

The Story Session

1. Introducing the book

- Begin by sharing any prior knowledge that the children have about India. Do any of the children have relatives or friends who come from or live in India? What might life be like in a village or small town in India? Briefly introduce the idea of Partition, using the historical information on page 343. Encourage the children to think about what it must have been like to live through this time, with people of different religions separated and many people caught up in the violence.
- Read the preface (page 1) and Chapter 1 (pages 2-9) out loud, and ask children for their reactions. How would they feel if they were Bilal? What clues does the opening give about what might happen next in the story? Do the children think this is a good opening chapter? Does it make them want to read on?

2. Reading the story

- Read Chapter 2 (pages 10-19). Talk about the lie Bilal decides to tell. Why do the children think Bilal felt his lie was necessary? Do they think he was right? What would they have done, in Bilal's place?
- Encourage the children to read the rest of the story independently or as a class. Pause occasionally to talk about the themes in the story – the clues we get that the situation between the different religious groups is worsening, the ways in which Bilal persuades other people to help him with his lie, etc.
- At the end of the book, share the children's thoughts about Bilal's lie. Have the children's feelings about the lie changed as the story progressed? Do they think that Bilal was right to lie to his Bapuji about what was going on? Why did he feel it was so important to do this? Do they think that Bilal's lie did any harm? What does it tell us about Bilal, that he worried so much about lying? In his last letter to Bilal, Bapuji tells him, "You are my India." What do the children think he meant by this?

3. Follow-up

- Bilal is a person who takes his duty and responsibilities very seriously, and in the story he is often very worried about what he is doing and what will happen. Ask the children to think about what advice they would give to Bilal. Would they encourage him to lie to Bapuji, or suggest that he tell the truth? They could role-play a conversation with Bilal in pairs, or write a short letter to him giving their advice.
- Can the children think of any other occasions when it might be kinder to lie than to tell the truth? Individually or in small groups, they could plan their own story based on a lie that is told for good reasons (e.g. to avoid telling someone something that would upset them, or to avoid something bad happening).
- The 'Through My Eyes' website of the Imperial War Museum contains a fascinating archive of first-person accounts by people who lived through Partition. Children can read and listen to their stories by visiting www.throughmyeyes.org.uk and searching for 'Indian Partition' in the Historical context section.

YOU TELL US

- Did you use these notes to have a Book Talk in class?
- Were they helpful?
- Are there any changes you'd like to see to make them more useful?

We're always happy to hear your comments, so please email us at bookfairs@scholastic.co.uk