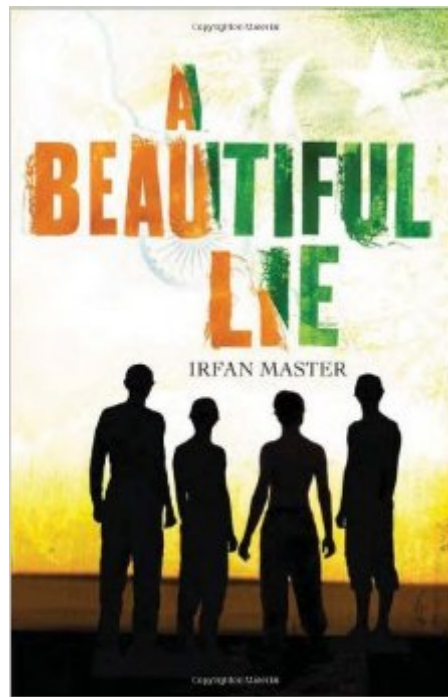


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# A Beautiful Lie



## Synopsis

“Everybody lies. We all do it. Many years ago I told one lie that has taken on a life of its own.” In India in 1947 the country is coming apart—and so is thirteen-year-old Bilal’s life. He is determined to protect his dying father from the news of Partition, news that he knows will break his father’s heart. With spirit and determination, and with the help of his good friends, Bilal builds an elaborate deception, even printing false pages of the local newspaper to hide the signs of national unrest. All Bilal wants is for his father to die in peace. But that means Bilal has a very complicated relationship with the truth. This extraordinarily rich debut novel brings to life a key moment in history and touches on the importance of tolerance, love and family.

## Book Information

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Average Customer Review: 4.7 out of 5 stars [See all reviews](#) (6 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #1,217,320 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #118 in [Books > Teens >](#)

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Grade Level: 7 - 12

## Customer Reviews

I was first captured by the title; given my stance against lying, what could be beautiful? Then I was sold once I found out it was set in India—that was literally all I needed to know to request. Upon opening the book up, I discovered that it was set in 1947 with rising tensions as India is partitioned into India and Pakistan, with most people choosing their ultimate location based on religion (Hinduism and Islam respectively), such tensions continuing into today. I really don’t know much about that history at all so it’s good that at the center of the story is a young boy with an immensely

appealing voice, insightful and respectful. His father loves India and it would break his heart to discover its pending separation and the anger within so because he's dying, young Bahil decides to hide the truth from him. This instantly reminded me of the German film "Goodbye Lenin!" where two young people hide the fall of the Berlin Wall from their mother. Since I liked that film, I figured I'd enjoy this book too. I was right. Bahil comes up with the idea pretty early in the book and recruits his three best friends to aid him in protecting his father from outside sources. Soon many other people in the village are drawn into the lies, amid ever increasing tension and the unstoppable partition. Bahil is a sweet and sensitive boy who immediately gained and retained my sympathy. I found the ending very poignant and I'll admit that I cried. This was my favorite read of August and I think you'll see why if you give it a try. I would have liked a bit more about the conflict between Muslims and Hindus; I felt like the author assumed that the reader knew more than this reader knew.

In *A Beautiful Life* Bilal tells the story of his small market town in India in the early summer of 1947. Bilal's father is dying. Bilal's father loves India. He loves all of India, and all the people of India; Muslims, Sikhs, Hindus alike. Bilal knows that India is about to be partitioned into three separate countries: East and West Pakistan for the Muslims and what's left of India for the Hindus. He's concerned that knowledge of the Partition will break his father's heart and he doesn't want his father's last days to be filled with heartache. In order to keep the knowledge from his father he fabricates a lie. Bilal and his friends then conspire to keep everyone away from the house where his father lays dying so that no one will tell his father the truth. The book is rich in the sights, sounds and scents of India. There's a beautiful description of one of Bilal's friends slicing and opening a pomegranate. The market is full of wonderful food. Banyan trees figure prominently. On the night of the Partition Bilal and one of his friends sneak into a building where a dance is being performed. Bilal describes the sitar music, tabla music, and a dancer with ghungroos around her ankles. He realizes she is dancing the story of India: the birds and the fish and the rivers and the monsoon rains. The book is also heavy with violence. As the time for the Partition comes closer, Muslim and Hindu groups escalate from skirmishing with each other to burning each other by tipping over barrels of oil and setting them on fire. The village is no longer safe for Bilal, but he will not leave without his father and he will not take his father out of the town that has been his home. The lie itself and the conspiracy surrounding it seems a bit like a construct used to tell the story.

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