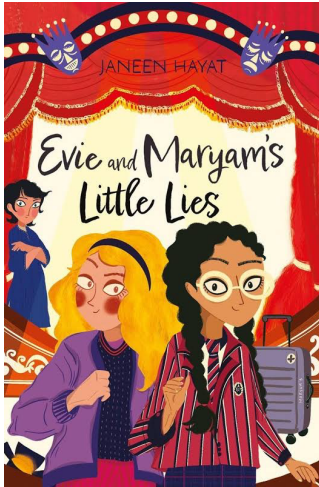


Evie and Maryam's Little Lies by Janeen Hayat

Teacher Notes



THEMES

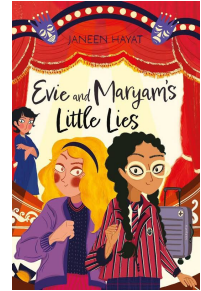
Identity, Truth, Deception, Friendship, Family,
Isolation, Racial prejudice, Belonging,
Social class, Bullying, Social Media,
Pride, Acceptance

Discussion Questions

- Do you think little lies often lead to bigger lies?
Explain your answer with examples from the story.
- Do you think telling 'little lies' is ever a good idea?
Are there times when it might be best not to tell the whole truth?
- How are Maryam and Bilal's experiences of Hanley similar? How are they different?
- Evie, Maryam and Bilal all find themselves in new situations that are out of their comfort zones. How do they cope with the challenges of their new environments?
- Out of these four ideas (themes), which one do you think the story does the best job of exploring?
 - Belonging (fitting in)
 - Identity (who we really are)
 - Deception (lying or hiding things)
 - Prejudice (being treated unfairly)

Discussion Questions by Chapter

Chapters 1 - 5: London, UK, Present Day



Chapter 1

- Maryam feels proud when inviting Evie to help herself to items from the shop. Mum is proud of Maryam for being accepted on to the Hanley School scholarship programme. Why are they proud? How would you describe the feeling of being 'proud'?
- Why do you think Mum believes that going to Hanley School will '*change everything*' for Maryam?

Chapter 2

- Evie tells her parents an '*almost-truth*' about the play being produced in the West End. Do you think this is an 'almost truth', or a lie?

Chapter 3

- Maryam describes feeling '*sort of nervous*' about starting at Hanley. What other emotions do you think she might be feeling?
- What is your first impression of Hanley School? Would you like to go there?

Chapter 4

- What do you think Evie should have said when Julia asked where Maryam was?
- Do you think people should get permission before filming videos of others?

Chapter 5

- Why does Maryam not feel particularly welcome at the welcome party?
- Maryam texts Mum: '*I'm great. I'm meeting loads of people.*' Why do you think she does not tell Mum the truth about how she is feeling?
- Do you think inventing a strong and fearless 'alter ego' is a good way of coping with difficult situations?

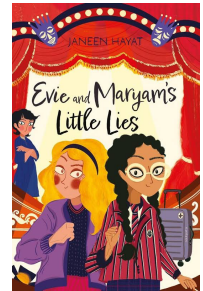
Chapters 6: Karachi, Pakistan, 1956

- *'Bilal thought to himself that sometimes he understood why his friends were outcasts.'*

What do you think he means by 'outcasts' and why might his friends be viewed that way?

- Why do you think Bilal's friend Saleem does not want to be seen going to the cinema with a girl?

- *'You're a boy of great potential.'* What possibilities and opportunities do you think Abbu imagines for Bilal?



Chapters 7 - 12: London, UK, Present Day

Chapter 7

- *'The heart of the story was in India.'* What does this phrase suggest about how central India is to the story of *Our Family Tree*?
- Which pitch do you think Bill Jeffrey liked best? Why?
Which pitch did you like best? Why?

Chapter 8

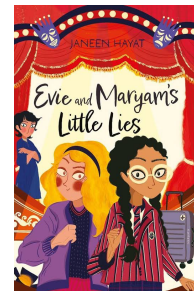
- Do you think Hanley School has done a good job preparing Maryam for life there?
What else could they have done to help her settle in?

Chapter 9

- Why did Evie decide to copy her presentation from the internet rather than write it herself? What are the risks and consequences of doing this?
- *'If only she had more time to do everything she needed to do, she would be fine.'* What advice would you give Evie about how to manage her time?

Chapter 10

- Do you think it was fair for the maths teacher to take five points from Milton House because Maryam had not completed her homework?
- In what ways does Hanley School match Maryam's fantasy of what private boarding schools are like? How does it differ from what she imagined?
- How does Maryam feel about not being in the top English set?
- Do you think some of the other students in the class perceive themselves as 'better than' Maryam?



Chapter 11

- Why does Evie think that Maryam might have a secret boyfriend?
- How do you think Maryam feels when she admits to Evie that she does not have any friends at Hanley?

Chapter 12

- *'Being honest, I don't feel like me.'* Why does Maryam not feel like herself at Hanley?
- Why does Maryam feel so nervous about the reading she has agreed to do?
- *'What's our lie then?'* Now that Evie and Maryam have started telling little lies, do you think it will be easier or harder to make up further lies?

Chapters 13 - 15: Pakistan and UK, 1956

Chapter 13

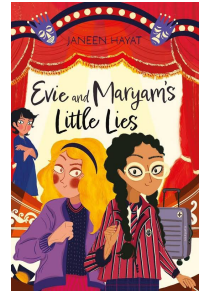
- What does Shehenaz think Bilal might enjoy about England?
- Why does Bilal not want to go to England?

Chapter 14

- How do the other boys treat Bilal at the welcome dinner?
- Why does Bilal wish he could give Shehenaz all of his shirts?

Chapter 15

- Do you think bullying incidents happen often at Hanley? Give reasons for your answer.
- Do you think Bilal is correct in thinking that Master Clement does not wish to be associated with him?
- Do you agree with Susannah that not needing a name to be special is a beautiful idea? What makes somebody special?
- Why does Bilal introduce himself to Susannah as Bill?
- What other 'little lies' does Bilal tell Susannah about his identity and background?



Chapters 16 - 27: Hertfordshire, UK, Present Day

Chapter 16

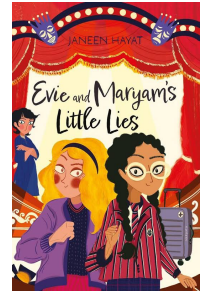
- Why does Maryam use Diwali as the excuse for her leaving school early? Do you think she should have used this lie?
- It says on the Hanley school website that they '*strive to make every culture feel welcome*'. To what extent do you think they have achieved this?
- How do the Rumi poetry book, the toothpaste powder and the silk shirt help Evie and Maryam to work out Bill Jeffrey's true identity?

Chapter 17

- Why is Evie surprised to realise that Kemi is lonely?
- Do you think it is hypocritical for Evie's parents to use social media for work but not allow her to use it?
- Why is Albie so upset when Kemi posts about him online?

Chapter 18

- Do you think Maryam should feel guilty about missing the reading at the Hanley boat race? Explain your reasons.
- *'Bill's whole persona was about rejecting where he came from.'* Having read about Bilal's childhood experiences at Hanley, how do you feel about this statement?



Chapter 19

- Do you think Kemi should have been asked to leave the fellowship?
- Do you think Evie or Kemi hold greater responsibility for violating the fellowship agreement?

Chapter 20

- *'Maryam wondered how much more out of control it could get.'*
How have Evie and Maryam's little lies escalated and created more problems?

Chapter 21

- Evie has to explain to her friends why she told people that her play was definitely being made into a West End show. *'It was sort of ... a misunderstanding that got out of hand.'*
Do you think this is a fair explanation?

Chapter 22

- Do you think Maryam should have confronted Bill about his identity?
Were you surprised by his reaction?

Chapter 23

- Why did Albie decide to tell everyone that he was doing the fellowship?
- How do you think Evie felt when Maryam's mum was telling her off?

Chapter 24

- What do you think Bill said to Maryam's mum in the courtyard?
- *'After today, she would be changed in Mum's eyes forever - never again the honest, hard working girl who was good at stuff.'* Do you think people often tell lies to avoid disappointing others, or to maintain a certain identity?

Chapter 25

- *'It was almost unbearable to hear everything she'd lied about at once.'*
Which lie do you think was the most significant?

Chapter 26

- *'He was not who I am now... he was another boy in another place.'*
Do you think moving to a new home, school or country can completely change a person's identity?
- *'I even learned how to make jokes. They needed to be small and a bit mean. That's banter...'* Do you think jokes need to be 'small and a bit mean'?
- Why does Bilal offer to share all his connections with Maryam?
- Why does Maryam decide to go back to Hanley? Do you think this is the right decision?

Chapter 27

- What do you think influenced Evie to decide to focus on homework rather than the fellowship reading?

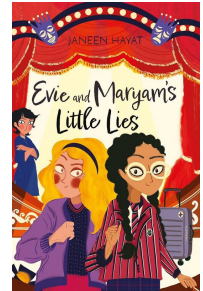
Chapters 28 - 29: Hanley, Uk

Chapter 28

- Why do you think Bilal hides his duffel bag under the floorboards in the cleaning cupboard?
- Do you think Bill is likely to get along with his new roommate?

Chapter 29

- How has Maryam's impression of Damien changed from their first meeting in the English class?
- Do you think things will be better for Maryam at Hanley from now on?



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