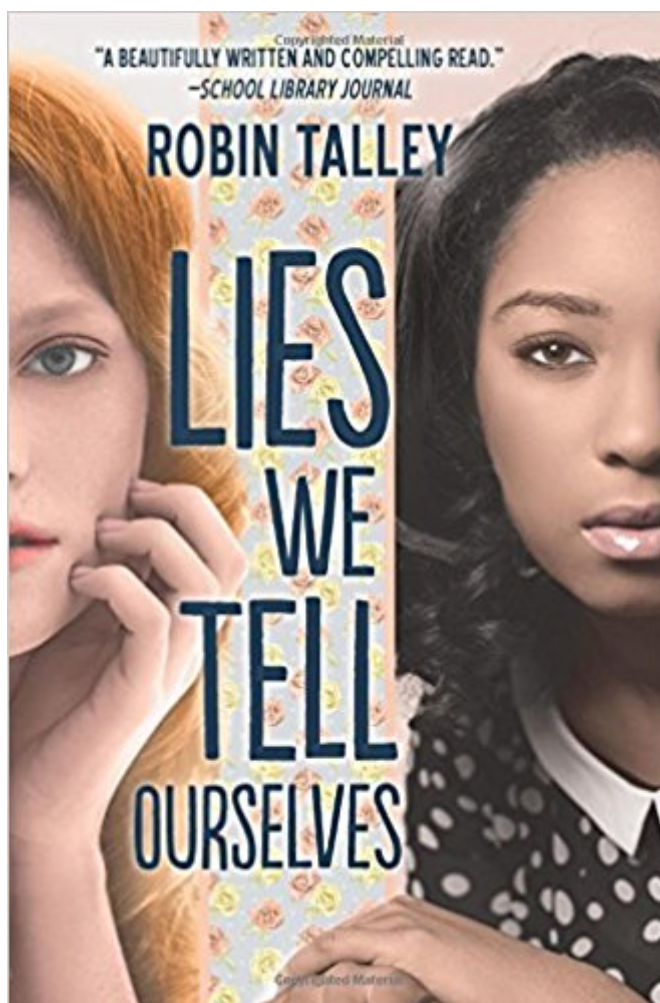


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Lies We Tell Ourselves: A New York Times Bestseller (Harlequin Teen)



Synopsis

In 1959 Virginia, the lives of two girls on opposite sides of the battle for civil rights will be changed forever. Sarah Dunbar is one of the first black students to attend the previously all-white Jefferson High School. An honors student at her old school, she is put into remedial classes, spit on and tormented daily. Linda Hairston is the daughter of one of the town's most vocal opponents of school integration. She has been taught all her life that the races should be kept "separate but equal." Forced to work together on a school project, Sarah and Linda must confront harsh truths about race, power and the fact that they may be falling for one another. Boldly realistic and emotionally compelling, *Lies We Tell Ourselves* is a brave and stunning novel about finding truth amid the lies, and finding your voice even when others are determined to silence it.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

"[A] well-paced, engrossing story.... [A] beautifully written and compelling read." -School Library Journal
"A well-handled debut." -Booklist
"A piercing look at the courage it takes to endure...forms of extreme hatred, violence, racism and sexism." -Kirkus Reviews
"The big issues of school desegregation in the 1950s, interracial dating, and same-sex couples have the potential to be too much for one novel, but the author handles all with aplomb. What makes it even better is that both Linda's and Sarah's points of view are revealed as the novel unfolds, giving meaning to their indoctrinated views.... This is a meaningful tale about integration." -VOYA
"I found myself at turns grateful and horrified as I read Talley's fictionalized account of integration.... *Lies We Tell Ourselves*

might be fiction, but the story is true-and it's one we should never forget." -NPR"A stirring portrayal of the fight for integration in the late 1950s.... Both [integration and gay rights] are touchy subjects, yet Ms. Talley navigates them with grace. She concentrates on her characters, developing their personalities, their conflicting interests, and showing how their experiences affect them.... This is not an easy book to read, but there's a lot of hope at the core of the story.... Definitely a must-read book... I'm sure this book will go down in the young adult canon as a classic." -Pittsburgh Post-Gazette

Robin Talley studied literature and communications at American University. She lives in Washington, DC, with her wife, but visits both Boston and New York regularly despite her moral opposition to Massachusetts winters and Times Square. Her first book was 2014's *Lies We Tell Ourselves*. Visit her online at robintalley.com or on Twitter at [@robin_talley](https://twitter.com/@robin_talley).

Sarah Dunbar is in one of the first groups of black students to integrate into the all white Jefferson High School in Virginia in 1959. From the first day of school and onward, she and her cohorts are harassed and threatened by the white students (and the teachers). They are subject to a number of humiliations and violence. Sarah, an honor student at her all black school, is put into remedial classes simply because she is black and the white administration has decided that black kids aren't capable of keeping up with the white kids intellectually. Sarah endures the endless days of being spit on, having things thrown at her, being called names, being pushed and shoved, etc. She does all this and tries to protect her little sister, who is also in the integrating group, at the same time. She harbors some ill feelings towards her parents and the local leaders of the NAACP for encouraging herself and the others to go into this school, but does her best to hold her head high and persevere. Meanwhile, there is a white student at the school, Linda Hairston, who is the daughter of the main newspaper's editor and most outspoken critic of de-segregation. Linda hates and fears her father but has been brought up hearing negative things about black people and believes in all the "reasons" the races should stay "separate but equal." She sees the new black students as "instigators" and is irritated that they weren't happy to simply stay at their own school. She writes editorials for the school newspaper that blame the black kids for the abuse they are enduring at the hands of the whites. In her mind, they are ungrateful and lesser people who have arrived out of their selfishness to ruin her senior year. When Sarah and Linda end up assigned to work on a project together, both are upset about it. Sarah

knows Linda's feelings about herself and the other black kids, and Linda not only feels she is above having to work with Sarah on the project, but also fears her father's reaction if he finds out about it. So, they decide to meet secretly. As they are forced to interact more and more, Linda starts to question the things she has been brought up to believe about blacks. However, she has a habit of seeing Sarah as different from the others, continuing her dislike for the other black students. Linda waivers back and forth between liking Sarah and hating her. Some of the things that come out of Linda's mouth are so offensive, it's hard to believe Sarah would even continue to try to get through to her, but she does, and they end up forming a special friendship. I really liked *Lies We Tell Ourselves* for the most part. I think it's a very important book, and one that everyone should read, just to experience what Sarah and the others went through in a first person narrative. It's so much different than reading about this period of history in a textbook or even a non-fiction book. This feels so much more personal. I felt the fear, anger, and the humiliation along with Sarah. I even empathized somewhat with Linda, who was so much a product of her environment and her overbearing father. That doesn't excuse the way she acted, but I was able to understand her character. The secondary characters were well-developed, and I was able to see things from their points of view as well, especially Ruthie's. The problem I had with *Lies We Tell Ourselves*, which is going to keep me from giving it five stars, is the budding romance between Sarah and Linda. It's not that it was an inter-racial lesbian relationship, I don't have a problem with that, it's more that it was a relationship between two people from such different mindsets, backgrounds, and histories. I never felt that Linda accepted the equality of blacks, especially so much so that she would consider getting involved romantically with Sarah. I also never understood Sarah's interest in Linda, other than to educate her on her misconceptions of the different races. They just seemed too different to me. I never really felt any chemistry between them either, unless it was supposed to be in the almost constant arguments. I understand the link between racial and sexual prejudice, but I think it was just too much to take on in one book. I think it would have been much better had the relationship between Linda and Sarah been left as simply a friendship. However, that said, I would still recommend the book as a good eye-opener into the history of integration. You can see more of my book reviews at [Bookworm Book Reviews](#).

I had decided a while ago that I was going to give this book a try. It honestly surprised me because it was a constant what's going to happen next because every time you turn around something new

is happening. It was definitely a good decision, especially being from the LGBT community who is also engaged to a beautiful woman who happens to be African American. It just shows that civil rights has always been a real problem. Not just as an African American, but as being gay. It was easy to relate to because had I been born earlier, it could have just as easily been me or my fiancée.

For me, the most compelling aspect of this book was its realness in plot, because at one point, the beginnings of integration in schools was real. The characters, the dialogue, and development of the story were authentic and heartwrenching, and I believe Talley has written a beautifully crafted work that highlights history, through the means of fiction, with which can be translated to the up and coming young adult generations. Although as adult it was difficult to repetitively read the N word used throughout a YA novel, Talley would not have been able to honestly represent the times without doing so. Overall, I was impressed with the wide span of the conflicts this novel covers, which certainly stretches far beyond race, and I would hope that the youth of today (and of the future) pick up this text.

But this book made me question myself and the people around me, and broadened my horizons. Such a ride! I would really like to read everything this author used as a reference for *Lies We Tell Ourselves*. I didn't expect this book to be this intense, and yet make me feel hopeful. Discrimination based on skin color and sexual orientation still very much exists, but one sacrifice of a brave soul at a time, and everyone will be closer and closer to realizing we are all real, living, breathing, FEELING human beings. We all deserve to be our true self, no matter what miseducated lies other people, or we ourselves, tell us.

One of the best books I have ever read. Sometimes I would find myself with tears in my eyes and sometimes I would be all smiles but not once did I forget the importance of this book. Thank you. It was an amazing read.

This was a very hard book to read and I really expected less about race and civil rights and more about lgbt issues but I guess when it comes down to it its pretty much the same issue, inequality! Difficult to read with everything going on today but a good book that makes you think if you're open to other opinions!

Mesmerizing, thoughtful, hard to read and harder to put down. I grew up in the aftermath of desegregation in the '60s and '70s, and this book struck home. It also reminded me that there is yet a lot of work to do to achieve real equality no matter your race, sexual orientation, religion, or ethnicity.

I've read this book twice now. After the first time, I was too stunned to write a review. I immediately decided to read it again, and launched right into that, without taking a break by reading anything else. The book was so good on the second reading, I feel like reading it a third time. The opening chapters in particular are written with such intensity, I felt as if I was Sarah, or one of her friends, when she entered Jefferson high for the first time. I raged and I cried and I felt hope as I read this book - and I think the chapters from Linda's POV made it so excruciatingly clear how segregated the US South actually was. Linda had some pretty wild ideas about what a black person was, that's for sure, and it all felt completely realistic to me as a reader. This is one of those rare books I gladly label as a must-read.

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