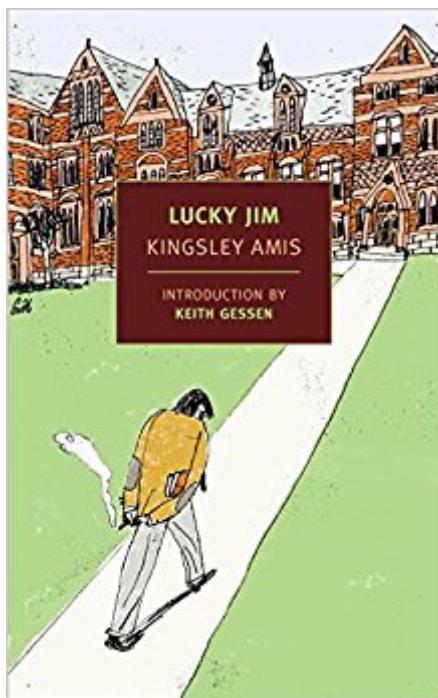


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Lucky Jim (New York Review Books Classics)



Synopsis

Regarded by many as the finest, and funniest, comic novel of the twentieth century, *Lucky Jim* remains as trenchant, withering, and eloquently misanthropic as when it first scandalized readers in 1954. This is the story of Jim Dixon, a hapless lecturer in medieval history at a provincial university who knows better than most that “there was no end to the ways in which nice things are nicer than nasty ones.” Kingsley Amis’s scabrous debut leads the reader through a gallery of emphatically English bores, cranks, frauds, and neurotics with whom Dixon must contend in one way or another in order to hold on to his cushy academic perch and win the girl of his fancy. More than just a merciless satire of cloistered college life and stuffy postwar manners, *Lucky Jim* is an attack on the forces of boredom, whatever form they may take, and a work of art that at once distills and extends an entire tradition of English comic writing, from Fielding and Dickens through Wodehouse and Waugh. As Christopher Hitchens has written, “If you can picture Bertie or Jeeves being capable of actual malice, and simultaneously imagine Evelyn Waugh forgetting about original sin, you have the combination of innocence and experience that makes this short romp so imperishable.”

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Although Kingsley Amis’s acid satire of postwar British academic life has lost some of its bite in the four decades since it was published, it’s still a rewarding read. And there’s no denying how big an

impact it had back then--Lucky Jim could be considered the first shot in the Oxbridge salvo that brought us Beyond the Fringe, That Was the Week That Was, and so much more. In Lucky Jim, Amis introduces us to Jim Dixon, a junior lecturer at a British college who spends his days fending off the legions of malevolent twits that populate the school. His job is in constant danger, often for good reason. Lucky Jim hits the heights whenever Dixon tries to keep a preposterous situation from spinning out of control, which is every three pages or so. The final example of this--a lecture spewed by a hideously pickled Dixon--is a chapter's worth of comic nirvana. The book is not politically correct (Amis wasn't either), but take it for what it is, and you won't be disappointed. --This text refers to an out of print or unavailable edition of this title.

We still read it for the humor, the biting dialogue, the bitter lines.  •Christian Lorentzen

I waited far too long before reading this classic work. Been a long time since I burst out laughing in public with a Kindle in my hands. But 'Lucky Jim' has that quality - and many more. The story is a simple boy/girl tale but some of the characters and their English eccentricities are a joy to discover. Simply magical.

"Lucky Jim" is Jim Dixon - who appears to be a most unlucky man. He recently landed a university teaching job, but he's miserable. Terrible at his job, Dixon is left wondering throughout the book whether his position will be continued. In addition to his job woes, he seems to have great contempt for most everyone around him, including his neurotic girlfriend, Margaret. Things worsen when he's invited for a weekend of music at a senior professor's home and he meets the professor's son - Bertrand. A buffoonish artist, Bertrand nevertheless has an alluring girlfriend, the lovely Christine. Dixon unsurprisingly is drawn to Christine, despite her stuffy manner and seeming arrogance. Embarrassing Bertrand and stealing away Christine become him main priority. In the meantime, he still needs to prepare a lecture on "Merrie England" that will be attended by his superiors and local town dignitaries. Will he survive?The novel is a model of dry British wit - at times laugh-out-loud hilarious. Dixon is a fantastic literary character - a cynic who personifies the scorn we all feel at times. As Amis writes about Dixon, "all his faces were designed to express rage or loathing." In addition to his cynicism, Dixon is incredibly irresponsible and engages in all sorts of mischievousness, resulting in hilarious predicaments. Nevertheless, you cannot help but root for him to succeed. The writing is spectacular - each scene bristles with detail and nuance. In particular, Amis beautifully portrays difficult interpersonal situations frankly and accurately, replete with

requisite humor. Although the book drags at times, it's a first-rate read. Most highly recommended, particularly for readers who enjoy novels set in academia.

Little slow to get started but engaging and very funny. Recommend for reading as part of a wider range of topics. Selected it from a 100 books you must read

Had to buy another copy because my son took mine. One of my absolute favorite books in the world. British Fifties Fiction.

This was a random shot that turned into disappointment once I saw the cover, a plastic looking superimposition of whomever the title character was supposed to be. Although it is not "The comic novel of our time," its Englishness is very endearing. Author Kingsley Amis uses what is annoying about British persona instead of displays it. His primary concern is showing some kind of pretense in higher education and English aristocracy, most likely because they are in reality very closely intertwined, and using them as the foundation for a juvenile fascination with a pretty girl. The damaged goods girl is Margaret. The down-to-earth beauty is Catherine. Jim is "lucky" because Margaret is eventually proven to be a grandstander who faked an empty bottle of sleeping pills. Otherwise, readers would not stand for Jim Dixon's superficial switch to the beautiful Catherine, who is also mismatched with the real comic figure of Bertrand. Not only does he have the English name, he has the beret, the nepotism, and the exaggerated art career. Although he is clearly a cad, a word Amis might not ever use in the book, Jim is not clearly a protagonist. The story is very patient in turning this into clarity. The love story is a blueprint. Everybody recognizes it, but Amis perfects it by delaying in all the way until page 142. "She said nothing for a moment, then spoke rather in her censorious manner: "Even if that were not true, it needn't prevent me from marrying him." She would continue on with Bertrand, whose father is Welch, the tenured professor grown stiff with academic parties, except for some of the nebulous characters in the book. Dixon answered Catherine with a cutting observation, which the book grows full of, "Yes, I know women are all dead keen on marrying men they don't much like. I mean, he'd always be having rows, and you say you don't like rows. Are you in love with him?" The last question echoes the Victorian hangover. She answers that she does not know what "love" means. All of this

was set up by the very straight forward hole burning episode. Dixon drinks to excess and then falls asleep smoking in the room Welch has provided for him. Another tricky plot was a cab sabotage. These are two things harder to believe than to just read. The explanation finally comes out on page 181, presumably after the laugh out loud antics like prank phone calls had been revealed as hardly believed.

Terrific writing, funny, vividly presented.

An important novel when it appeared in print, and of considerable historical interest at the present. Stylistically very sophisticated. Excruciatingly funny at times.

I read *Lucky Jim* for the 1st time at the age about 18. It was very good Czech translation anf I liked it enormously. At that time it was one of few books from the "West" which communist regime permitted to publish. Now I read the original at the age four times higher and liked it too, though for somewhat other reasons. *Lucky Jim* is very witty and full of intelligent humour and I can recommend it to readers of all generations

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