

Discussion Questions

- 1 What do you think Amis meant by referring to Jim as “lucky” in the book’s title?
- 2 At the beginning of *Lucky Jim*, Kingsley Amis compares assistant history professor Jim Dixon with Dixon’s department head, Professor Welch. What sets Dixon and Welch apart? How do their attitudes towards the study of history differ? How does their class background influence their sense of responsibility, whether academic or social? Are they alike in any ways?
- 3 What role(s) does humor play in *Lucky Jim*? As we can see with Jim’s somewhat dire situation, comedy is often generated at the expense of the misfortune of others. What does Amis’s use of humor say about his attitude towards university life? Do you feel that those who are mocked deserve it? Who, if anyone, comes out unscathed?
- 4 Some modern critics have labeled Kingsley Amis a misogynist. From his portraits of Margaret Peel, Christine Callahan, Carol Goldsmith, Mrs. Welch, and Miss Cutler, would you agree with this assessment? How is each portrayed? What traits does Amis seem to value in women? How do his female characters relate to men? Do you think that Amis was simply a “man of his times”? What do you think of this defense or explanation?
- 5 Kingsley Amis was one of Britain’s “Angry Young Men,” a group of postwar authors from working-class backgrounds who aimed to skewer upper-class pretensions. What evidence of this do you find in *Lucky Jim*? How is this portrayed in the book and in the film?
- 6 How true to the novel is the film version of *Lucky Jim*? Why do you think the filmmakers made the changes they did? How is inner dialogue, action, and character handled? Which do you prefer and why?
- 7 Speculate on a contemporary version of *Lucky Jim*: do race, gender, and class play different roles today? How have immigration and affirmative action changed society? What might Kingsley Amis have to say about “political correctness?” Which of today’s issues might Amis take on? What might be Jim’s “lucky” end today?

Lucky Jim, by Kingsley Amis, was first published in 1954. For more about the MASTERPIECE film *Lucky Jim* and related features, visit <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/masterpiece/luckyjim/index.html>.