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## Kingsley Amis

### The 50 greatest postwar writers: 9

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When he burst on the scene in 1954 with his funny satire on conventional, respectable England, *Lucky Jim*, set in a provincial university, Kingsley Amis was seen as one of the “angry young men” of the 1950s.

His first job had been as a lecturer at Swansea University, and the book, which grew out of his unhappy experiences there, inspired many other “campus novels”. For the rest of his life, pomposity, hypocrisy and false culture were his enemies. He followed it with further funny, but implicitly moral books about ruthless, sexually predatory young men in “swinging” Britain, such as *That Uncertain Feeling* (1955), and *Take a Girl Like You*, developing into a more conservative, although just as entertaining writer. He did not scorn popular fiction, writing a detective story, *The Riverside Murders*, a ghost story, *The Green Man*, and a book about science fiction, *New Maps of Hell*.



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*Jake's Thing* (1978) satirised psychiatrists and Amis became known as an enemy of political correctness when his novel *Stanley and the Women* (1984) was rejected by some US publishers and hated by feminists as it was thought too anti-women. In fact it was about men's desperate dependence on women. His 18th novel, *The Old Devils*, a bitter but entertaining hark back to the Swansea of *Lucky Jim*, won the 1986 Booker Prize.

In his latter years, Amis enjoyed developing a curmudgeonly public persona, especially in his *Memoirs* in 1991, in which he told rude but still very comic stories about many people he had known, particularly other writers. He was also a deft and witty poet. He was knighted in 1990 and died in 1995.

One to read: *Take a Girl Like You* (1960)

#### More about Kingsley Amis

[Read his obituary, printed in the Times on October 23, 1995](#)

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