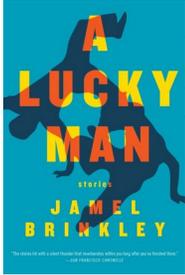


# Books by the Stack



## **A Lucky Man by Jamel Brinkley**

Jamel Brinkley's stories reflect the tenderness and vulnerability of black men and boys whose hopes sometimes betray them, especially in a world shaped by race, gender, and class—where luck may be the greatest fiction of all.

**Why you'll like it:** *Haunting. Moving. Lyrical. Complex characters.*

**About the Author:** Jamel Brinkley's stories have appeared in A Public Space, Gulf Coast, and elsewhere. He is a graduate of the Iowa Writers' Workshop and has been a Wisconsin Institute for Creative Writing Fellow. He lives in Madison, Wisconsin.

### **Questions for Discussion**

1. Which of the characters or stories stuck with you after you finished the book?
2. Throughout the book, characters are shaped by the people in their lives, but also the ones that are missing (for example, absent parents). How does this absence affect the characters' stories?
3. In "Infinite Happiness," Brinkley writes: "For most people there is a gap, for some a chasm, between the way they dream themselves and the way they are seen by others. That gap might be the truest measure of one's loneliness." How do the characters of each story deal with this gap?
4. Most of Brinkley's stories touch on the fraught relationships between men. How are the characters in each story shaped by the expectations of how a man should act?
5. Thinking about the title of the collection, who do you think are the "lucky men"?
6. How do the titles of the stories influence how you read or feel about the stories?
7. Several of the characters are at a turning point in their lives, like the brothers reconnecting in "Everything the Mouth Eats" and Lincoln almost getting caught in "A Lucky Man." Do you feel hopeful that these characters will be able to make a change for the better? Why or why not?
8. Did the order of the stories affect how you felt about them? How would you change the order of the stories?

