

How do the  
environmental  
settings in "things we  
didn't see coming" set  
a dark and...

[Environment](#), [Ecology](#)



How do the environmental conditions in *Things We Didn't See Coming* set a dark and hopeless tone? When reading Steven Amsterdam's "Bold, original and sneakily affecting" novel; *Things We Didn't See Coming* readers are made aware of the environmental changes in the dystopian world that Amsterdam presents. As the chapters progress in the novel a different environmental event happens or can be predicted to happen. Although environmental conditions seem to make a world the environmental conditions described in *Things We Didn't See Coming* appear to break the world in which they live in. Along with environmental conditions comes change and in this case disaster leaves the people of this time distraught and diverse alternating in a dark and hopeless place to live, or die. As if the natural disasters weren't hard enough to try and survive through, readers are also made aware that there are pandemics and pestilences going on at the same time. This creates a dark and hopeless tone as the readers are left wondering; does it come down to survival of the fittest when the environment is against everything and everyone? And will it ever stop being dark and hopeless for the characters in the novel? As Otis suggests in the first chapter of *Things We Didn't See Coming* "The future is a hospital, packed with sick people...and suddenly the lights go out, the water shuts off, and you know in your heart that they're never coming back on. That's the future". This immediately makes readers contemplate what the future may look like, this also sets a dark and hopeless tone to the novel before anything in the environment has changed. In the chapter "What We Know Now" there have been no signs of environmental changes as of yet, only predictions being made of what might happen to the world and the environment . Otis

makes a prophecy in the first chapter that " There will be breakdowns that can't be fixed [and] water will be as valuable as oil..." Otis' predictions were proved accurate during the rest of the novel. Readers grasp an understanding that the world is exactly that, fighting for survival, through a dark and hopeless tone that Amsterdam designates it to be. Not only is the environment described in a dark and hopeless tone but the characters that have to survive in that environment are described as dark and hopeless too. In the chapter " Cakewalk" readers are introduced to a man that has been infected and affected by the plague. The diseased man is described as being "...on all fours, throwing up blood under a tree". This suggests not only the physical state of the man but it also puts forth the fact that he is alone. Despite readers being unaware of what has happened to this man Amsterdam makes his readers ponder the reason of why this man is alone, how long he has been alone and also whether he was abandoned and left alone because of the plague. It is through dark and hopeless tone that readers are aware that this man does not have long to live, in fact every time the narrator thinks he's dead he " turns, or coughs or spits", and of course it is because of the environmental conditions that has given him this horrible condition as well as a death sentence. The world that Amsterdam introduces in Things We Didn't See Coming is devastating; it is full of catastrophic events and misery. In a world like this it is nothing but expected to act dark and feel hopeless. In the end it comes down to whether the fight for survival is worth it. Readers are made aware of this when the narrator's grandparents die in a suicide murder. It was easier for them to die than to be alive in a disastrous world. This describes the exact effects that the

environmental conditions have on individuals, especially elderly individuals who have witnessed drastic changes in their environment such as “ World War 1, influenza, the Depression, World War 2, concentration camps [and] the atomic bomb” with the grandparents living through all of this it is clear the pressure and struggle of living in Amsterdam’s world must be like, worse than all of the disasters listed above. Readers are able to acknowledge this when they themselves feel dark and hopeless about this new horrific world. Throughout *Things We Didn’t See Coming*, Amsterdam uses emotive language to engage his readers into the novel. The most effective of his devices is the use of dark and hopeless tone. This is because it is easy for readers to relate to the story line and the characters in the novel. It is easy to comprehend the effect that the environment has on not only the physical environment of the world but the individuals living in the world too. The environmental changes in *Things We Didn’t See Coming* set a dark and hopeless tone, as well as leaving the readers feel dark and helpless too.