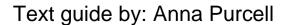


ENGLISH TEXT SUMMARY NOTES "Things We Didn't See Coming"



Copyright © TSSM 2010

TSSM ACN 099 422 670 ABN 54 099 422 670

A: Level 14, 474 Flinders Street Melbourne VIC 3000

T: 1300 134 518
F: 03 97084354
W: tssm.com.au
E: info@tssm.com.au

Contents

AUTHOR NOTES	4
CONTEXT	5
GENRE	6
Audience	7
STRUCTURE	8
STYLE	9
Orientation	9
Spare and Detached Narration	9
Pathos	10
States of mind	
Symbols	11
SETTINGS	
CHAPTER SUMMARIES	
CHARACTER PROFILES	
Protagonists and Antagonists	
Nature as Character	
Major Characters:	
Minor Characters:	
Relationships Between Characters	
THEMES AND ISSUES	
Fear and Distrust	40
Hope versus Despair	40
Sickness and Suffering	
Power	
Nature and Technology	41
Humanity	42
IMPORTANT QUOTES	43
SAMPLE ESSAY TOPICS	
FINAL EXAMINATION ADVICE	
REFERENCES	
References Used	
References for Students	50

AUTHOR NOTES

Steven Amsterdam is an Australian writer living with his partner in Melbourne although he was raised in New York. He has broad interests, ranging from cooking and writing to globetrotting. Amsterdam has travelled extensively, including trips to Indonesia, China and Japan.

He studied at Bronx Science, The University of Chicago, The French Culinary Institute and the University of Melbourne.

His work includes writing travel guides and designing book jackets. He purports to being a liberal voter, having sent in an absentee vote for Obama, from Australia, in the most recent U.S. election. He also describes himself both as a psychiatric and palliative care nurse.

Amsterdam's book, *Things We Didn't See Coming* received literary acclaim upon its release. It won *The Age* 'Book of the Year' award in 2009 and was chosen for the NSW Premier's Literary Prize shortlist. It was also selected for a Barnes and Noble's 'Discover Great New Writers' series. It was his first novel.

For full account of Steven Amsterdam's life and works, explore his website: http://www.stevenamsterdam.com/Steven_Amsterdam.html. Also, examine Angela Meyer's 'Literary http://blogs.crikey.com.au/literaryminded/2009/03/23/steven-amsterdam-a-responsive-Minded' interview/ and a second interview with the author at: http://expressmedia.org.au/voiceworks/?p=640

CONTEXT

The context of *Things We Didn't See Coming* is within an unspecified Western country suffering the ravages of various environmental disasters and dramatic political changes. The exact location remains deliberately imprecise, along with the narrator's name, presumably to show how applicable the circumstances are too many situations.

Amsterdam draws on a range of dystopian themes in his work yet sets them in the context of natural or environmental disaster rather than the more traditionally dismal outlook of totalitarian control, such as that detailed in George Orwell's *Nineteen Eighty-Four*, Aldous Huxley's *Brave New World* or the more feminist *Handmaid's Tale* by Margaret Atwood. He also steers clear of notions of nuclear holocausts such as those suggested in *Z For Zachariah*. Significantly, Amsterdam's work deliberately eschews political moralizing, as he does not stand in judgment of a particular world view, nor does he give specific warnings embedded in heavy-handed, bleak scenarios. In fact, his work has been praised for its vision of hope, as writer David Rakoff says:

"One puts down the book feeling something close to hope. Perhaps it's the life-is-long, cyclical wisdom of it all, maybe it's a newfound appreciation for the 'Here And Now', although I'm inclined to think it's just gratitude that there are such writers around." —David Rakoff, author of Don't Get Comfortable

Amsterdam does evoke a shattered political framework in his novel yet it is always tempered by very personal and human touches. Steered by emotions, past experiences and embedded in relationships with others, the political scene emerges naturally as part of the human experience rather than a remote and omnipotent force in individual lives.