

*New York 2140*  
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Social and Scientific context:

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This is a book of our own time, in which we are beginning to see some of the effects of climate change (although no individual event can be said to be absolutely the result of climate change, the trends we are now seeing – more extreme weather, prolonged wildfire seasons, changes in rainfall patterns and year after year of record breaking global temperatures – almost certainly are). Despite this, there are still people who refuse to believe that climate change (or global warming) is real and is caused by human activity.

The after-effects of the global banking crisis of 2008 are still with us, and inequality between rich and poor is increasing in countries like the UK and the USA.

There can be little doubt that we are in the midst of a mass extinction event, in which numerous species will cease to exist, and that this is the result of human activity.

Despite all of the above, the election of Donald Trump as US President in November 2016 has led to a push to reduce or eliminate regulations in banking, consumer protection and environmental protection in the USA. In 2018 the US Department of the Interior sought to reduce protections for endangered and threatened species in the USA. This information is included *not* to make a political point, but to show the political climate in which this novel was written and is being read.

General themes:

The effects of unregulated, or poorly regulated, capitalism, and how a lack of public understanding of economic systems allows those systems to be used and manipulated for the benefit of the few.

Impact of climate change

The power of human ingenuity and adaptability in coping with adverse situations

The power of community

Main Characters:

Mutt and Jeff (computer coders/hackers working in the financial industry)

Gen (police inspector)

Franklin (investment banker)

Vlade (building superintendent/manager in the building where the characters all live)

Amelia (on-line equivalent of a reality tv star and campaigner for wildlife)

Charlotte (community organiser/activist)

Stefan and Roberto (orphans trying to survive independently on the edge of the community)

Unnamed citizen (acts as narrator and explainer)

#### Ideas to explore:

##### Wealth vs Value

Much of the story centres on the influence of wealth and financial systems on society. The desire for wealth, and the advantages that it brings, is a motivating factor for several of the characters. One of the themes of the novel, however, is the discrepancy between monetary value and what constitutes true value.

##### Need for trustworthy systems

From the start, the characters of the novel come up against systems that seem to work against them. As the characters Mutt and Jeff realise, the world's financial systems are designed and run by the wealthy, and therefore are 'rigged' in favour of the already rich. For society to work for everyone, systems – economic, and governmental – that are open and trustworthy are essential.

##### The benefits of science and technology

One of the truly wonderful aspects of this book is the way in which the author foresees science and technology being used to help humanity cope with the changes brought on by global warming.

##### The importance of community and relationships

This is really at the heart of the novel, as the various characters come together as a community to help one another, protect the building in which they live and, ultimately, to try and make a bigger difference in the world.

#### Religious themes

Religion doesn't really play a part in the story, but several themes that are easily recognised as religious or spiritual are present.

Care for creation – not only is this theme implied by the setting of the novel in post-sea level-rise New York, but is also referenced in the character Amelia's work with endangered species, and the characters' responses to the hurricane (Part 7).

Redemption – this theme is played out most obviously in the story of Franklin (investment banker turned good guy) and Vlade, but in different ways.

Hope – despite being set in a post-disaster world, in which humanity seems incapable of learning from its past mistakes (although the novel imagines a future in which technology makes it possible to continue living in places like New York after catastrophic sea level rise, it also envisages that the systems that have largely prevented us from dealing with the causes of climate change remain in place), hope is present throughout the stories of the different characters – hope for a better future personally and hope for a better world.