

The Soothsayer - Nostradamus



Nostradamus was a 16th century French astrologer best known for his publication *Les Prophéties*, which contains 942 poetic quatrains written to predict important events in the future. Nostradamus has been credited by some with accurately predicting many world events such as the Rise of Adolf Hitler, the nuclear bombing of Nagasaki and Hiroshima, the assassination of John F. Kennedy, and even the 9-11 terrorist attacks. Many historians, however, assert that his predictions are too vague, misinterpreted, or even mistranslated, to have any real value.

On the next page are some of Nostradamus's quatrains (translated into English). Can you identify what events he "predicts?" Then, think of an important historical event and play the role of Nostradamus. Write a quatrain that "predicts" its occurrence.

"The great man will be struck down in the day by a thunderbolt,
An evil deed foretold by the bearer of a petition.
According to the prediction, another falls at night time.
Conflict at Reims, London and a pestilence in Tuscany."

What event does this predict?

"Earthshaking fire from the center of the Earth
Will cause tremors around the New City.
Two great rocks will war for a long time,
Then Arethusa will redden a new river."

What event does this predict?

"Near the gates and within two cities
There will be scourges the like of which was never seen,
Famine within plague, people put out by steel,
Crying to the great immortal God for relief."

What event does this predict?

Compose your own Nostradamian quatrain below (or on a new page). Play the role of Nostradamus and write about an event that has happened in history. Don't be too specific. Try to match your writing as closely as possible to Nostradamus. When you have finished, see if a classmate can identify the event based on your quatrain.