

1

00:00:00,662 --> 00:00:18,224

This series presents information based in part on theory and conjecture.

2

00:00:18,224 --> 00:00:22,744

The producer's purpose is to suggest some possible explanations, but not necessarily

3

00:00:22,744 --> 00:00:26,825

the only ones to the mysteries we will examine.

4

00:00:26,825 --> 00:00:35,146

Four hundred years ago, a renowned French doctor decided to put in writing strange

5

00:00:35,146 --> 00:00:43,427

visions that he summoned up by occult means. He believed they foretold the future, and they

6

00:00:43,427 --> 00:00:50,267

have become known as the prophecies of Nostradamus. Many people have trusted them

7

00:00:50,267 --> 00:00:58,868

completely and even planned their lives around them. Adolf Hitler was one. The words of Nostradamus,

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00:00:58,868 --> 00:01:07,149

although written four centuries earlier, seemed to describe Hitler uncannily. In the court of

9

00:01:07,149 --> 00:01:15,430

Henry II and Catherine de Medici, Nostradamus was believed. Were they all deluded? Or was

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00:01:15,430 --> 00:01:21,391

there some mystic formula which Nostradamus used to foresee events yet to happen?

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00:01:21,391 --> 00:01:36,193

Early in the 16th century, Nostradamus gained fame as an astrologer after he published

12

00:01:36,193 --> 00:01:41,033

prophecies in verse form. Nostradamus described his method of predicting the future.

13

00:01:42,033 --> 00:01:49,634

Sitting alone at night in secret study, it is placed on the brass tripod. A slight

14

00:01:49,634 --> 00:01:54,795

flame comes out of the emptiness and makes successful that which should not be believed

15

00:01:54,795 --> 00:02:03,356

in vain. The wand in the hand is placed in the middle of the tripod's legs. With water,

16

00:02:03,356 --> 00:02:11,236

he sprinkles the hem of his garment and his foot. A voice, fear, he trembles in his robes.

17

00:02:11,236 --> 00:02:16,517

Divine splendor, the God sits nearby.

18

00:02:26,038 --> 00:02:31,399

Since the beginning of history, advice has been sought from prophets who foretold disasters

19

00:02:31,439 --> 00:02:41,040

yet to come. Mankind's belief in free will and control of our own destiny sits uneasily

20

00:02:41,040 --> 00:02:47,360

with a suspicion that catastrophes, natural and man-made, are in some way preordained.

21

00:02:47,360 --> 00:02:57,962

Nostradamus himself believed that his predictions were of fates that could be avoided,

22

00:02:58,722 --> 00:03:00,722

destinies that could be changed.

23

00:03:08,243 --> 00:03:11,523

He never doubted that he was genuinely seeing the future.

24

00:03:14,523 --> 00:03:21,364

He chose to write his prophecies in what are known as quatrains, four-lined rhyming verse in the

25

00:03:21,404 --> 00:03:28,845

Provençal dialect of southern France, which was his home. It was the time of the Inquisition,

26

00:03:28,845 --> 00:03:35,606

when men and women were burned for lesser heresies than the one he practiced, so he deliberately

27

00:03:35,606 --> 00:03:43,567

disguised and confused the quatrains using anagrams Latin and Greek. Specific dates are rare.

28

00:03:44,567 --> 00:03:50,287

Even so, his verses evoke vivid images of calamities on earth.

29

00:03:50,287 --> 00:04:01,329

At sunrise a great fire will be seen, noise and light extending towards the north. Within the globe,

30

00:04:01,329 --> 00:04:07,649

death and cries are heard. Death awaited them through weapons, fire and famine.

31

00:04:08,649 --> 00:04:17,370

The greatest army on the march put to flight will scarcely be pursued further.

32

00:04:17,370 --> 00:04:26,611

The army reassembled and the legion reduced, they will be driven out of France completely.

33

00:04:38,613 --> 00:04:46,173

He organized his quatrains in groups of 100 called centuries. Nearly 1,000 predictions have come down to us.

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00:04:46,173 --> 00:04:54,094

His fame spread with extraordinary speed after publication of the first volume in 1555.

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00:04:54,094 --> 00:05:02,895

At the court of Henry II and Catherine de Medici, they were read avidly.

36

00:05:03,895 --> 00:05:10,056

One was of particular interest because it was thought to predict the manner of the king's death.

37

00:05:10,056 --> 00:05:15,697

The young lion will overcome the older one in a field of combat in a single fight.

38

00:05:15,697 --> 00:05:23,858

He will pierce his eyes in their golden cage. Two wounds in one, then he dies of cruel death.

39

00:05:23,858 --> 00:05:32,219

An Italian prophet had already warned Henry II that both the beginning and end of his reign

40

00:05:32,219 --> 00:05:38,379

would be marked by a duel. The first duel had been fought without injury and now it was thought that

41

00:05:38,379 --> 00:05:46,420

the king's jousting days were over. But the occasion of a double royal wedding of his sister and his

42

00:05:46,420 --> 00:05:57,981

daughter to foreign nobility proved too much of a temptation. He faced his young lion, Count

43

00:05:57,981 --> 00:06:06,662

Gabrielle de Montgomery. The young lion will overcome the older one in a field of combat in a single fight.

44

00:06:06,662 --> 00:06:16,823

The king wore a protective visor according to contemporary accounts made of gold.

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00:06:16,823 --> 00:06:25,424

Was this as Nostradamus called it a golden cage? A field of combat in a single fight.

46

00:06:25,424 --> 00:06:53,747

The two horsemen raced towards each other.

47

00:06:54,148 --> 00:07:04,589

Montgomery too late tried to withdraw his lance. The lance splintered, fragments driving up under

48

00:07:04,589 --> 00:07:14,110

the protective gold visor. Henry II took ten agonizing days to die from septicemia. It seemed

49

00:07:14,110 --> 00:07:19,630

such a striking confirmation of Nostradamus' prediction that Catherine de Medici made him

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00:07:19,750 --> 00:07:28,791

Medesan du Roi, a doctor and soothsayer by royal appointment. For the rest of his life he was

51

00:07:28,791 --> 00:07:35,712

famed throughout Europe and after his death in 1566 people began to interpret lines from his

52

00:07:35,712 --> 00:07:43,593

quatrains as referring to their own time. Erica Cheatham, a scholar of medieval French who has

53

00:07:43,633 --> 00:07:49,234

made a special study of Nostradamus, finds some of these supposed prophecies significant.

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00:07:49,234 --> 00:07:55,674

One of the things I find most convincing about Nostradamus and personally made me

55

00:07:55,674 --> 00:08:01,315

really interested in following him through was the fact he gave specific dates that occurred

56

00:08:01,315 --> 00:08:07,316

after his death. He writes that in 1666 the city of London should be destroyed by fire. He gives

57

00:08:07,316 --> 00:08:14,596

the date of the death of King Charles I, 1649. The Parliament put the King of London to death.

58

00:08:14,596 --> 00:08:20,237

Louis Pasteur, the great biologist, he not only gives his name but in the same verse he gives the

59

00:08:20,237 --> 00:08:32,798

founding of the Institute 1895. London burnt by fire in three times twenty plus six. The great

60

00:08:32,798 --> 00:08:52,401

fire of London happened in 1666. The French Revolution in 1791. By night he will come through

61

00:08:52,401 --> 00:09:02,002

the forest, two partners in a roundabout way. The Queen, the White Stone, the Monk King dressed in

62

00:09:02,002 --> 00:09:11,243

grey at Barren. Marie Antoinette, her hair turned white through shock, escaped with Louis the 16th

63

00:09:11,243 --> 00:09:18,123

secretly through the town of Barren. For not wanting to consent to the divorce, which then will

64

00:09:18,123 --> 00:09:25,564

be recognized as unworried, the King of the islands will be forced to flee and one put in his place

65

00:09:25,724 --> 00:09:34,845

who has no sign of kingship. King Edward VII of Britain abdicated because of his love of Mrs. Simpson

66

00:09:34,845 --> 00:09:43,246

and spent the rest of his life in exile. His brother George, who never expected nor wanted to become

67

00:09:43,246 --> 00:09:53,087

King, ruled in his place. But for those who see Nostradamus as having an outstanding prophetic gift,

68

00:09:53,407 --> 00:10:05,209

two names are always put forward. Napoleon, Hitler. Both names, if they were truly foreseen by

69

00:10:05,209 --> 00:10:14,570

Nostradamus, were disguised or coded. Napoleon was written as an anagram. Paul, Ney, Loron.

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00:10:15,570 --> 00:10:25,731

Juggle these around and they become Napoléon Roy, Napoleon the King. Napoleon, after his defeat at

71

00:10:25,731 --> 00:10:35,412

Waterloo, was exiled on the tiny island of Elba. After his escape and his victorious 100 days,

72

00:10:35,412 --> 00:10:42,013

a new empire began to grow for him. Stained with murder and enormous adulteries, the great

73

00:10:42,053 --> 00:10:49,813

enemy of all mankind, he will be worse than his ancestors, uncles and fathers in steel, fire and

74

00:10:49,813 --> 00:11:05,415

water, bloody and inhuman. Out of nearly 1000 such court trains that Nostradamus wrote,

75

00:11:05,415 --> 00:11:11,856

how many can be interpreted as having come true? Scholars such as Erika Cheetham think

76

00:11:11,896 --> 00:11:18,537

the proportion is very high. In my opinion, I think perhaps 73% is a rough average of what has

77

00:11:18,537 --> 00:11:26,858

come true. But remember that does cover a span of 400 years. As Hitler advanced through Europe,

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00:11:26,858 --> 00:11:33,778

his colleague, Gerbos, was busy orchestrating a propaganda campaign based on the 400 year old

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00:11:33,978 --> 00:11:42,779

prophecies. True or not, they were to have an effect on the strategy of the Second World War.

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00:11:42,779 --> 00:11:54,101

It was Frau Gerbos, wife of the Nazi propaganda minister, who first alerted Hitler to the strangely

81

00:11:54,101 --> 00:11:59,061

accurate way that Nostradamus seemed to describe events leading to the war in Europe.

82

00:12:00,061 --> 00:12:08,902

Elic Howe, a former British intelligence agent, detailed to assess the influence of Nostradamus

83

00:12:08,902 --> 00:12:19,223

on Hitler, explains what happened. Around the 20th of November 1940, once Gerbos was actually

84

00:12:19,223 --> 00:12:25,464

sleeping at home with his wife, she was reading a book about ancient prophecies and she was so

85

00:12:25,504 --> 00:12:33,025

excited about what she read about a particular prophecy which had been attributed to Nostradamus

86

00:12:33,025 --> 00:12:39,306

that she woke her husband up and said, Joseph, Joseph, you must listen to this. This is a prophecy

87

00:12:39,306 --> 00:12:44,546

that there would be a war in Poland in 1939 and it would be the end of the British Empire.

88

00:12:44,546 --> 00:12:55,267

A couple of days later, Gerbos was instructing his students at the propaganda ministry to

89

00:12:55,267 --> 00:13:02,788

prepare without delay a Nostradamus leaflet for the benefit of the French in order to depress and

90

00:13:02,788 --> 00:13:11,229

mislead. No fewer than 13 quartrains seemed to refer to Hitler, sometimes calling him

91

00:13:11,229 --> 00:13:18,470

Hister, sometimes the great or greatest leader and describing the swastika as the crooked cross.

92

00:13:19,470 --> 00:13:26,031

Even before hostilities began, military leaders on the French side began to dig the Maginot line,

93

00:13:26,031 --> 00:13:29,991

according to instructions apparently given by Nostradamus.

94

00:13:29,991 --> 00:13:40,272

A great trench, earth excavated. The water will be divided into 15 parts.

95

00:13:41,272 --> 00:13:48,833

The Nuremberg rally and the invasion and occupation of France.

96

00:13:48,833 --> 00:13:53,354

When the greatest man carried off the prize of Nuremberg,

97

00:13:53,354 --> 00:14:00,955

battle is joined with the French. He makes preparations. Some will regard him as good,

98

00:14:00,955 --> 00:14:04,675

others bad or uncertain.

99

00:14:11,276 --> 00:14:19,797

Italy and the Pact with Mussolini. Not far from Venice, the two greatest ones of Asia and Africa

100

00:14:19,797 --> 00:14:29,038

will be said to come from the Rhine and Hitler. Mussolini's black clothed fascists and the Pact with Hitler.

101

00:14:30,038 --> 00:14:41,399

Liberty will be occupied by a black, proud and villainous man. By Hitler, the Republic of Venice will be vexed.

102

00:14:46,400 --> 00:14:49,400

Aerial warfare at the Battle of Britain.

103

00:14:50,400 --> 00:14:59,761

He will use thunderbolts. So many in such an array. The machine of flying fire will come.

104

00:14:59,761 --> 00:15:27,124

A skeptic would call these quatrains obscure and irrelevant. And was Nostradamus genuinely foreseeing a swastika when he wrote the following?

105

00:15:28,124 --> 00:15:39,485

The great Pontiff by the Wallite Party who will subjugate the borders of the Danube. The cross pursued by hook or crook.

106

00:15:39,485 --> 00:15:44,486

Captives, gold, jewels, more than 100,000 rubies.

107

00:15:44,486 --> 00:15:52,487

And are even the references by name to Napoleon and Hitler as accurate as they first appear?

108

00:15:53,487 --> 00:15:57,487

Author John Sladek does not think so.

109

00:15:57,487 --> 00:16:09,489

There are hundreds of Napoleon quatrains in the prophecies. Mainly because I think the 19th century French scholars kept going over and over in Nostradamus and digging out anything that could be anything to do with Napoleon.

110

00:16:09,489 --> 00:16:22,490

The one I noticed particularly is the post of an anagram of Napoleon, which is P-A-U-N-A-Y-L-O-R-O-N. If anybody can make Napoleon out of this, they're a pretty good mystic themselves.

111

00:16:22,490 --> 00:16:27,491

In fact, it could be an anagram of just about anything. It could be an anagram of Europol Anon.

112

00:16:27,491 --> 00:16:36,492

There are a number of predictions which refer to something or someone called Hister, H-I-S-T-E-R.

113

00:16:36,492 --> 00:16:51,493

And this is usually taken by the Nostradamus believers as Hitler. But in fact it was a reference to the Danube River, which was called the Easter River in Nostradamus' time.

114

00:16:52,493 --> 00:17:01,494

It is said in defense of Nostradamus that he made his prophecies deliberately obscure in order to escape the charges of heresy and witchcraft.

115

00:17:01,494 --> 00:17:16,496

Moreover, if it is possible to look into the future, everyone in history who has attempted to do so has said that the picture is uncertain and indistinct, as if they are permitted only glimpses of what might be.

116

00:17:17,496 --> 00:17:26,497

Ron Wormuth, modern psychic, often consulted by the business community, explains foretelling the future.

117

00:17:26,497 --> 00:17:40,499

The true psychic part, or precognitive part, which is being able to sort of see around the bend in the river as Einstein put it, is relatively rare in that sense where it's completely without any sort of an input.

118

00:17:40,499 --> 00:17:59,501

I do believe that we can prevent future events. I'm not a fatalist. I happen to believe that we do have free choice. And I feel that being forewarned is being forearmed, which means that if a psychic tells you something that's negative, you can change it.

119

00:18:00,501 --> 00:18:07,502

If the Nostradamus' predictions come true in our lifetime, might they help to establish his authenticity?

120

00:18:10,502 --> 00:18:18,503

They speak of actions begun by a man in France leading to a crisis in Persia, the land now called Iran.

121

00:18:19,503 --> 00:18:28,504

It was indeed in France that the Ayatollah Khomeini lived in exile before returning to take over from the Shah.

122

00:18:28,504 --> 00:18:32,504

Erika Cheetham finds this completely convincing.

123

00:18:32,504 --> 00:18:38,505

When I enraged it initially, I said that this particular prediction was rubbish.

124

00:18:39,505 --> 00:18:51,507

It's number 70 in century one. It talks of a man in a turban who shall sit in France plotting the downfall of the Emperor of Persia. Unbelievable.

125

00:18:55,507 --> 00:19:03,508

Another quatrain can be taken to predict that the Prince of England will marry and that he will be the last prince on the English throne.

126

00:19:04,508 --> 00:19:10,509

Lastly, he seems, according to Erika Cheetham, to speak of the San Andreas Fault.

127

00:19:13,509 --> 00:19:27,511

A great earthquake. He gives an astrological date, the sun in 20 degrees of torus, which means May the 10th. He does not give the year.

128

00:19:34,511 --> 00:19:44,512

The overthrow of Ayatollah Khomeini, the last King of England, the eruption of the San Andreas earthquake on May the 10th.

129

00:19:46,513 --> 00:19:50,513

If all these happened, would it be just coincidence?

130

00:19:51,513 --> 00:20:02,514

One striking aspect of the prophecies of Nostradamus is that where they seem to mean something, they have often been unfulfilled.

131

00:20:05,515 --> 00:20:14,516

Hitler saw himself as the conqueror of Europe and Russia. Neither Nostradamus nor any of his astrologers foresaw his downfall.

132

00:20:15,516 --> 00:20:22,517

Napoleon believed he would win at Waterloo, as predicted by Nostradamus. He lost.

133

00:20:25,517 --> 00:20:38,518

The certain quatrains which were taken to mean the French Revolution and then were taken to mean the Napoleonic Wars and then were taken to mean the First World War and then were taken to mean the Second World War.

134

00:20:39,518 --> 00:20:48,519

So I don't suppose anything that's that vague really is of any value at all as far as predictive power.

135

00:20:49,520 --> 00:20:57,520

So far a lot of the things he said have come true or there has been accuracy there because I believe he did predict the Second World War.

136

00:20:58,521 --> 00:21:04,521

He's predicted also to do with the massacre of the Jewish race. He also predicted a great deal to do with Hitler.

137

00:21:04,521 --> 00:21:13,522

He also predicted a lot of our problems we have with Russia and many different things and he has been very accurate. I mean I think it has to speak for itself.

138

00:21:14,522 --> 00:21:28,524

In the end, perhaps most prophecies mean just what the listener intends them to mean. Possibly those rare true glimpses of the future that some people seem to have are half coincidence and half foresight.

139

00:21:29,524 --> 00:21:35,525

Perhaps they owe as much to self fulfillment as to the supernatural. We cannot be sure.

140

00:21:44,526 --> 00:21:51,526

Coming up next in search of continues with a look into the future at the end of life as we know it.

141

00:21:51,526 --> 00:21:57,527

Then 20th century with Mike Wallace takes a look at people who live on the edge in earthquake zones.

142

00:21:58,527 --> 00:22:06,528

And later tonight, Madame Hall's brothel, Alexander Graham Bell's bullet detector and other extraordinary things with stories to tell on history's lost and found.

143

00:22:07,528 --> 00:22:10,528

At 8 here on the History Channel where the past comes alive.

144

00:22:21,530 --> 00:22:22,530

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