

## Famous French People

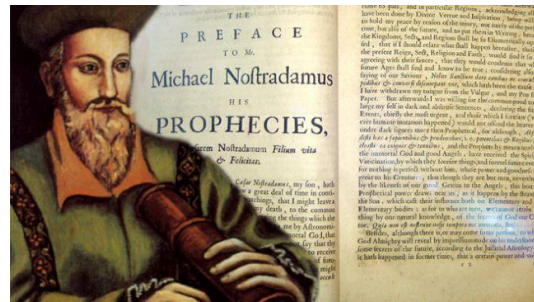
### Nostradamus

by Robert Shepherd

Vocabulary & pronunciation study by Sue Thomas ©

Retrouvez la traduction de certains mots à droite du texte

Les syllabes accentuées sont en gras et soulignées>\*



Hello, this is Robert Shepherd...and now EnglishWaves will take a look at the life of the famous French **apothecary**, physician, astrologer and reputed **oracle** who believed he was able to see the future and wrote his predictions in **quatrain** form – Nostradamus.

Born Michel de Nostredame either on 14<sup>th</sup> or 21<sup>st</sup> December 1503 in Saint-Rémy-de-Provence. He was one of nine children born to Reynière de St. Rémy and her husband Jaume de Nostredame, a wealthy **grain dealer** and part-time notary of Jewish descent. Michel's grandfather, Guy Gassonet, had converted to **Catholicism** 50 years earlier and changed the family name to Nostredame, partly to avoid **persecution** during the Inquisition.

Aged 14, Michel went to study **medicine** at the University of Avignon, but he left after just one year on the **course** due to the **outbreak** of the **bubonic plague**. He **eventually** completed his medical studies at the University of Montpellier and received his licence to practice medicine in 1525, when it was the custom of many **medieval** academics to Latinise their name. Michel de Nostredame became Nostradamus.

There was no known remedy for the plague, but it was Nostradamus who introduced the most **progressive** methods. He practised effective hygiene and encouraged the removal of infected cadavers from city streets.

Nostradamus also created the “rose pill” - a lozenge made of **rose hips** – and the cure rate was impressive. However, much was also **attributed** to keeping his patients clean, low-fat diets and plenty of **fresh air**.

Nostradamus received financial support from citizens of Provence and in 1531 he went to work in Agen, in south-western France where he married and had two children. Sadly, in 1534, his wife and children died—probably of the plague—while he was travelling to Italy. His **failure** to save his own wife and children reflected badly on him and he **fell out of favour**.

**quatrain** (n.) quatrain

**grain dealer** (n.) négociant en grain

**course** (n.) cours

**outbreak** (n.) épidémie soudaine

**bubonic plague** (n.) peste bubonique

**eventually** (adv.) finalement

**rose hips** (n.) églantine

**fresh air** (exp.) air frais

**failure** (n.) échec

**to fall out of favour** (exp.) tomber en disgrâce

Later, a **flippant** remark about a **religious** statue resulted in charges of heresy made against him, so he travelled through Italy, Greece and Turkey to avoid the Inquisition. One legend says that during his travels in Italy, Nostradamus met a monk called Felice Peretti and identified him as the future Pope. Peretti was ordained Pope Sixtus V in 1585.

In 1547, Nostradamus **settled** in his home-town of Salon-de-Provence and married a rich widow named Anne Ponsarde. They had six children together.

After some time, Nostradamus began to **focus** on the occult. In 1550, he wrote a successful first almanac of **astrological** information and predictions for the coming year.

Nostradamus' visions soon became an integral part of his works, so he **threw himself into** a massive opus entitled *Centuries*, which would contain 100 predictions **forecasting** the next 2,000 years. In 1555 he published *Les Propheties*, a collection of major, long-term predictions.

Although some **claimed** Nostradamus to be **fake**, insane and even the servant of the devil, he was **coveted** by Europe's elite. Catherine de Medici, the wife of King Henri II of France, even **summoned** him to Paris to create horoscopes for her children and he became counsellor and physician-in-ordinary to King Henri's court. While serving in this capacity, Nostradamus explained a prophecy thought to be about King Henri. It told of a "young lion" who would kill an older one on the field of battle. Although Nostradamus had warned the king he should avoid ceremonial jousting, he didn't and, the 41-year-old king took a lance behind the eye deep into his brain. He died 10 days later.

Nostradamus suffered from gout and **arthritis** for much of his adulthood and he was eventually **afflicted** by dropsy, where large amounts of fluid accumulate beneath the skin or within cavities throughout the body. In June 1566, Nostradamus wrote an extensive **will**, leaving much of his estate to his wife and children. On the evening of 1<sup>st</sup> July, he is **alleged** to have told his secretary Jean de Chavigny, "You will not find me alive at sunrise." The next morning he was reportedly found dead on the floor of his bedroom.

Most of the quatrains Nostradamus composed were about **misfortune** and many **enthusiasts** have credited him with predicting numerous events in world history, including the French Revolution, the rise of Napoléon Bonaparte and Adolf Hitler, the development of the atomic bomb and 9/11.

Critics claim the vagueness of his work and the similarity to some passages in the bible, made Nostradamus somewhat of a **chancer**. Yet while some people believe his **prophecies** will come true, many believe they already have.

**flippant** (adj.) désinvolte

**to settle** (vb.) s'établir

**to focus** (vb.) se concentrer

**throw oneself into something**  
(exp.) se lancer dans

**to forecast** (vb.) prédire

**to claim** (vb.) affirmer

**fake** (adj.) faux

**to covet** (vb.) convoiter

**to afflict** (vb.) affliger

**will** (n.) testament

**misfortune** (n.) malchance

**chancer** (n.) opportuniste

### \* Aide à la prononciation !

L'accentuation des syllables aide à comprendre les mots. En connaissant l'accentuation d'un mot on peut aisément le reconnaître à l'oreille et le comprendre, puis l'utiliser pour s'exprimer.

L'accentuation des syllables correspond à une prononciation plus forte, plus marquée. Exemples: **synonymous** mais **synonym**