

Entry Title: Prophecy

Name: Gabrielle Purcell **School:** Launceston College

Entry:

An overwhelming response to most dystopian fiction is the question: how did they know? The musing of how George Orwell could possibly have known the impending state of the world when he wrote 1984 is pondered extensively, regardless of the fact that we know how economist John Keynes and his peers successfully predicted the devastating repercussions of the Treaty of Versailles. It seems that people forget, because it is fiction, that no dystopian literature is a prediction of the future; it is a comment on its present.

There is a simple fact that many of us misunderstand history. Often we are coached on how to respect history, how to trace our lineage to see how we got where we are today. For instance, the lineage that shows that the width of some of NASA's best rocket boosters was actually dictated hundreds of years earlier when the Ancient Romans designed their horse-drawn chariots. Consequently, people are equipped with this generalised respect, something many may misinterpret as the ghost of an understanding.

We relish in recorded history. We laud it as the genius of our ancestors and yearn to resume the glory of 3000 years ago. And yet we fail to satiate it's primary function - to give us a blueprint for the present. That place, contrary to popular belief, is not lightyears ahead from anywhere else we have been.

The society of Ancient Athens based taxation in liturgy, calling on all those rich enough to benefit the wider community. Are we better, in a world where ten people hoard a combined net worth of 1.27 trillion dollars? Gender diversity has existed and thrived for thousands of years. Are we better, in a present where governments would rather examine the genitals of young girls than risk letting trans youth participate in sport? Aboriginal cultural burnings cultivated the land we press our feet against for lifetimes, generations, eras before the First Fleet ever sunk their leather soles into the shore of Warang. Are we better now, when our country - our precious red earth - is ravaged by wildfire for months on end?

When we pretend that the past was worse, we convince ourselves that we are better by default and that progress happens of its own accord. When we pretend that the past was better, we become trapped in a nostalgia that tells us we cannot change our time. But our world is not an uncontrollable snowball racing down a hill and it is not a well-crafted invention yoked by our forebearers and carefully attuned throughout the ages.

There is a comfort for all in the knowledge that we will one day be history. By the fact that our faults and mistakes will be awash with excuses of a 'less enlightened time.' If we do not arm ourselves now with a thorough, respectable analysis, then we will run ourselves into ruin while convincing ourselves that the way we live now is better than it once was. We must cling onto this, because the future means nothing if it is an ignorant cycle of the past. This is our only chance to make our chapter the enlightened time. Our only chance to leave behind a proud history for our posterity.

History may be our window into the past. But it is also our prophet. History is a guide who grips our hand, calluses and all against our relatively smooth palms. It might not all be perfect fact, but it is our truth.

And so, are we ready to tell our truth?