WHAT CAN A 16TH-CENTURY BOOK TELL US ABOUT FEAR AND STRANGE WEATHER?



WHAT'S HAPPENING?

A remarkable book called the Book of Miracles is going on display before it is sold at auction in London. Made in Augsburg in the 1550s, the book contains 167 colourful pictures of floods, storms, comets, eclipses, strange lights and other frightening events. One picture shows five suns shining over Leipzig. Another shows what looks like blood falling from the sky over Rome. People in the 16th century often believed that unusual natural events were warnings from God or signs that the end of the world was near. However, the book also records dates, places and eyewitness reports. Some events have scientific explanations. The five suns may show a sun dog, while the blood rain may have been dust from the Sahara mixed with rain. The book is expected to sell for between £700,000 and £1 million.

WHY IS THIS INTERESTING?

This book shows a society standing between two ways of understanding the world. Many people still explained disasters through religion and superstition, but others were beginning to record events carefully and look for natural causes. Its pictures also remind us that people in the past, like people today, were fascinated and frightened by dramatic news.

THINK LIKE A HISTORIAN

“Why did people explain strange weather in religious ways?”

Source: The Guardian

https://www.theguardian.com/books/2026/nov/16/book-of-miracles-apocalyptic-weather-visions-auction