

RECURSO GRATIS • NIVEL PRINCIPIANTE

Cartas desde el futuro

A B2 speculative story about prediction, privacy, and the subtle power of technologies that describe who we may become.

DATA

PREDICTION

CHOICE

APRENDE GRATIS EN [EZINGLES.COM](https://ezingles.com)

ANTES DE LEER

Prepare to read

A city launches a service that writes personalized letters from each resident's possible future self. The letters appear helpful—until one recipient investigates how their predictions are produced.

Think critically

Can a prediction change the future simply because someone believes it?

Reading goal

Analyze algorithmic prediction, consent, and self-fulfilling expectations. Notice how certainty is created through language rather than proof.

A message from 2046

In 2028, the city of Bellavista offered residents a free service called FutureLetters. Participants answered questions about work, health, family, finances, and ambitions.

An artificial-intelligence system then combined those answers with public records and local statistics. It produced a letter written in the voice of the participant twenty years later.

The company insisted the letters were not fortune-telling. They were ‘personalized tools for long-term **reflection**.’

Mateo Salas joined because the public library promoted the program. Two days later, he received an envelope designed to look faded by time.

‘Dear Mateo,’ it began, ‘You stayed in Bellavista, became a school counselor, and finally learned that stability was not the same as fear.’

The letter mentioned his mother's diabetes, his unfinished psychology degree, and his habit of abandoning applications before submitting them. Its **specificity** made the imagined future feel discovered rather than invented.

Mateo completed his degree application that evening. When he told friends, they praised the letter for revealing what he had always wanted.

A second participant, Elena Park, received a different message. Her future self thanked her for accepting a management position and postponing plans to open a bakery.

Elena rejected the advice. Yet over the following weeks, every business risk began to feel like evidence that the algorithm knew her better than she knew herself.

The letters did not issue commands. They created a narrative, and each present decision began to appear as movement toward or away from it.

The assumptions inside the prediction

Mateo volunteered to help older library patrons use FutureLetters. He noticed that the system's futures differed in patterned ways.

Residents from wealthier areas received letters describing entrepreneurship, travel, and career changes. Residents from lower-income neighborhoods were more often praised for keeping stable jobs and avoiding debt.

The advice was statistically **plausible**. It was also shaped by past inequalities.

Mateo requested the program's methodology. The company published broad principles but called its model proprietary.

He then discovered that participants had technically agreed to include property records, school history, consumer profiles, and **inferred** health risks. The consent screen described these sources as 'relevant contextual data.'

At a council hearing, the company argued that greater data produced more useful letters. It cited Mateo's college application as evidence of positive impact.

Mateo appreciated that impact. Still, he asked whether a beneficial outcome justified invisible assumptions about what futures were realistic for different people.

A company scientist explained that every letter represented one possible path, not a destiny. Mateo pointed to phrases such as 'you became' and 'you stayed,' which communicated certainty despite the disclaimer.

Language mattered. 'You may become' invited judgment; 'you became' allowed a prediction to borrow the authority of memory.

Elena testified that her letter had made caution feel responsible and ambition feel immature. Nothing in the model measured the cost of a future opportunity she might never attempt.

Writing back to the future

The city suspended FutureLetters while an independent panel reviewed it. Some participants protested; they valued the motivation and perspective the letters provided.

The panel did not recommend banning the technology. Instead, it required clear data controls, multiple contrasting scenarios, and explanations of which assumptions influenced each one.

When the service returned, Mateo received three letters. One described him as a counselor in Bellavista. Another imagined him leaving for graduate school. A third described a career outside education after family responsibilities changed.

None felt as magically precise as the original. Their visible uncertainty made them more **honest**—and less emotionally powerful.

The company worried that users would find the revised product disappointing. The panel replied that usefulness should not depend on concealing limitations.

Elena opted out and requested deletion of her data. Then she enrolled in a weekend business course, not because opening a bakery was guaranteed to succeed, but because she wanted better evidence for her own decision.

Mateo kept his first letter. It had helped him act, even though its authority had been exaggerated. He wrote a response and placed both pages together.

‘Dear future Mateo,’ he began, ‘Thank you for reminding me that I wanted to finish. But you do not remember me, because you do not exist yet.’

He completed the application and eventually began studying part-time. His choice resembled the predicted path without proving the prediction correct.

A future can guide us as a story, Mateo concluded, provided we remember who wrote it, what data shaped it, and which alternatives were excluded from the page.

Predictions become dangerous when they stop
describing possibility and begin quietly deciding who is
permitted to imagine more.

Words for prediction and technology

reflection	reflexión
specificity	especificidad
plausible	plausible
proprietary	de propiedad exclusiva
inferred	inferidos/as
disclaimer	descargo de responsabilidad
assumptions	suposiciones
opted out	se retiró / canceló
limitations	limitaciones
self-fulfilling	autocumplida

COMPREHENSION

Analyze prediction and power

A. Choose the best answer

1. What does Mateo do after his first letter? a) Opens a bakery b) Applies to finish his degree c) Leaves Bellavista
2. What pattern does he observe? a) Identical letters b) Different ambitions by neighborhood wealth c) Random grammar errors
3. Why is 'you became' powerful? a) It sounds like memory b) It uses slang c) It hides the future
4. What does the revised service provide? a) One stronger prediction b) No personal data c) Multiple explained scenarios

B. Analyze

1. How can a statistically plausible prediction reproduce inequality?
2. Why are the revised letters less emotionally powerful but more honest?
3. Does Mateo's later education prove the original prediction was accurate? Explain.

C. Write

Write two contrasting 4-sentence letters from possible future selves. Identify one assumption behind each and one present choice that remains open.

ANSWER KEY

Review and reflect

A. 1. b 2. b 3. a 4. c

B. Suggested answers

1. A model trained on unequal past outcomes may label limited opportunities as realistic and quietly discourage larger ambitions. 2. Multiple scenarios reveal uncertainty and assumptions, but they lose the emotional authority of one confident narrative. 3. No. The letter influenced his decision, and many other paths remained possible; resemblance is not proof of foreknowledge.

Sample contrast

Future A: You remained in your city and built deep community relationships. This assumes local opportunities stayed available. Future B: You moved abroad and learned to rebuild your routines. This assumes travel became affordable. Today, you can still gather information, strengthen skills, and delay either decision without surrendering it.

KEEP GOING

Debate: Should predictive systems be allowed to sound certain when they are not?