



**STORYLAB**

PRESENTS



**JULES VERNE'S**

# **20,000 Leagues Under the Sea**

## WHAT YOU NEED TO KNOW

# Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*

At the start of the story, ships are under attack around the world. Everyone thinks the attacker is a massive sea monster. Professor Aronnax leads a group to hunt it down. When their ship gets rammed, he and two companions are thrown overboard. There, they make a shocking discovery. The “monster” is an incredible submarine called the Nautilus. The submarine’s captain is Nemo, a mysterious genius.

Captain Nemo has rejected the surface world to live beneath the waves. He rescues the three men, but they become prisoners in his underwater kingdom.

What happens next is an extraordinary journey through the ocean’s hidden world. Professor Aronnax and his two companions discover underwater forests, ancient sunken cities, and sea creatures beyond imagination. The Nautilus itself is like a floating mansion with everything in it—libraries, art collections, and deadly weapons.

But as amazing as these adventures are, the prisoners slowly realize they’re trapped with a madman. Captain Nemo uses his submarine as a weapon to sink ships and kill people.

The underwater paradise becomes a nightmare as Nemo



The 20,000 leagues in the title of the book refers to the horizontal distance of travel. It is roughly the distance as traveling around the earth twice.

becomes more unstable and violent. As they watch Nemo’s attacks, Professor Aronnax and his two fellow prisoners recognize that Nemo has completely lost his mind. The prisoners know they have to escape. But how can they break out of a submarine in the middle of the ocean?

Things come to a head during a terrifying storm. Professor Aronnax and his fellow prisoners manage to escape in the Nautilus’s small boat. As they flee, they see the Nautilus and probably Captain Nemo being sucked into the violent, spinning water of a whirlpool.

The three survivors are rescued and return to civilization. However, the death of Captain Nemo is left uncertain. The book ends with Professor Aronnax (the one telling the story) wondering if the captain still roams the seas or if he has found peace in death.

A RETELLING FROM  
20,000 LEAGUES UNDER THE SEA

## The Monster Attack



*"But the squids weren't giving up. Two more arms whipped through the air. They grabbed one of the sailors, lifting him up like a rag doll."*

The Nautilus submarine was cruising through deep ocean waters when something massive appeared outside its windows. It was a squid, but not just any squid. This thing was a straight-up sea monster. It was 26 feet long with tentacles twice the length of its body. Its huge green eyes stared through the glass. The creature's beak looked like a giant parrot's mouth that could snap a person in half.

Captain Nemo and his crew watched in horror as more giant squids showed up. Seven of them surrounded the submarine. Their tentacles slapped against the metal hull. The beasts were so big they weighed as much as long-haul trucks.

Suddenly, the Nautilus shuddered to a stop.

"What happened?" someone shouted.

Captain Nemo's face went dark. "The propeller's jammed. One of those things got its tentacles caught in the blades. We will have to go to the surface and fight the monsters hand-to-hand."

"Are you insane?" cried one of the crew.

"Our electric weapons are useless against their soft flesh," Nemo explained. "We'll have to use axes and harpoons."

The crew grabbed their weapons—axes, harpoons, and anything sharp they could find. When they opened the hatch, chaos erupted. A massive tentacle shot down like a snake. It was followed by twenty more writhing arms trying to get inside.

Captain Nemo swung his axe. He chopped off one tentacle. It crashed down, still twitching.

But the squids weren't giving up. Two more arms whipped through the air. They grabbed one of the sailors, lifting him up like a rag doll. He was gasping for air as he swung helplessly above the deck.

"Help! Help!" he screamed. The battle for survival had begun. It was man versus monster on the open ocean, and only one side would win.

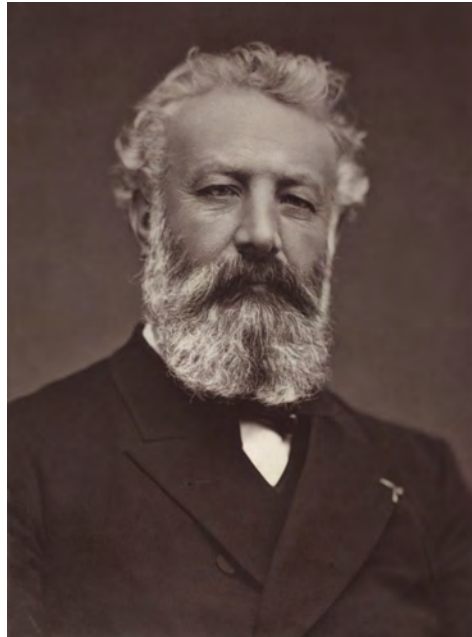
## ABOUT THE AUTHOR

# How Jules Verne Predicted the Future

In 1870, the French writer Jules Verne wrote about technology that seemed impossible. He imagined inventions that would not become real for another 50 years. He basically designed the future before anyone knew what it would look like.

When Verne wrote *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, submarines were tiny vehicles that could only stay underwater for a few minutes. The best submarine of his time, the French *Plongeur*, was powered by high-pressure air. It looked like a floating coffin.

But Verne's *Nautilus* was a beast. It was 230 feet long and armored like a battleship. This wasn't just a submarine; it was a luxury underwater mansion!



Jules Verne

Furthermore, in 1870, most people used candles and oil lamps. But Verne imagined batteries powering an entire submarine. The *Nautilus* could dive to crushing depths and stay submerged for days.

The wild part? Almost everything Verne imagined has happened. Electric submarines became the standard. Modern subs use nuclear power, but they still work on the same principles Verne described. His characters wore self-contained diving suits with air tanks on their backs. Modern scuba gear, invented in the 1940s, matches his description.

Verne didn't just guess when he wrote about these designs. He carefully studied submarine models at the 1867 World's Fair in Paris. He studied the latest diving equipment designs. But then he took those early ideas to the next level. He imagined what they could become with endless money and genius engineering.

Real submarine inventors were inspired by Verne's book. John Holland built the U.S. Navy's first commissioned submarine. He named his company the "Nautilus Submarine Boat Company." Verne's book was also the "shipboard bible" for famous ocean explorer Jacques Cousteau.

Did Verne actually predict the future? No, he was a writer, not a scientist. But he imagined it so clearly that inventors used his work as blueprints to make it real.



## TEXT CONNECTION

# Captain Nemo: From Angry Prince to Clown Fish

Jules Verne created one of literature's most epic characters in Captain Nemo. Movie makers have been stealing this name ever since. You might be surprised by the ways they've done so.

Jules Verne chose the name "Nemo" with care. After all, Captain Nemo wasn't just any submarine captain. The word "nemo" in Latin means "nobody" in English. It fits the character Nemo perfectly. The captain was a complete mystery for much of the story.

Verne originally planned to give his main character a different background story. Nemo was to be a rebel from Poland who was seeking revenge against Russia for crushing his homeland. But Verne's publisher was too worried about losing Russian readers. He made Verne change the character.

So, Verne wrote Nemo's history another way with the captain as an Indian prince. The prince's family was killed during a rebellion against British rule. The prince renamed himself Nemo and builds the Nautilus as more than a submarine. He created a floating fortress of revenge against the powers that destroyed his life. He is like Batman with a nuclear submarine. He sails the oceans and sinks warships, while he lives in underwater luxury.



In Disney's "Finding Nemo," the main character is a young clownfish named Nemo.

The media company Disney first retold Captain Nemo's story in 1954 when they made a movie version of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Fifty years later, Disney made another film with a character named Nemo. This time, they completely flipped the script. In Disney's "Finding Nemo", Nemo is a cute little clownfish. They turned an anti-hero into a family-friendly star.

Captain Nemo has become a model for many anti-heroes. He stands for mysterious captains, mad scientists, and underwater explorers. From comic book characters to video games, his name pops up everywhere. Today, Nemo is code for "genius with technology and a grudge." Verne's character is so iconic—even his character's name has meaning!

## TEXT REFLECTION

# The Real Sea Monster— Giant Squids

**F**or hundreds of years, sailors told terrifying stories about sea monsters attacking ships. Scientists thought these were just myths. Then, they discovered giant squids are real. Giant squids are huge. Their bodies are about 16 feet long but with their two long tentacles, which can be 33 feet long, they stretch even further. They have eight powerful arms. Their feeding tentacles are covered with hundreds of suckers. The suckers are lined with razor-sharp hooks that can slice through almost anything.

These sea monsters have features to help them survive in the deep ocean. Their eyes—the size of dinner plates—are



In 1954, the carcass of a giant squid washed ashore in Norway. Scientists said it was 30 feet and 2 inches long!

the largest eyes in the animal kingdom. They are perfect for hunting in the ocean's pitch-black depths. They also have beaks so hard they can crack through bone. In the past, scientists had little access to giant squids. They learned about these sea creatures mainly from dead bodies that washed ashore or from pieces of giant squids found inside dead sperm whales.

About 20 years ago, two Japanese scientists had an idea for learning more about giant squids. Their idea was to follow the sperm whales that hunt giant squid to lead them to these mysterious animals. The scientists found areas where whales showed marks from battles with giant squids. There, they lowered special cameras with squid bait into the deep layers of the ocean.

After many tries, they succeeded. On September 30, 2004, their camera captured a living giant squid attacking their bait. The giant squid fought for hours. Eventually, it ripped off its own, long tentacle to escape. When the scientists pulled up their equipment, the severed arm was still trying to grab on with its powerful suckers.

The photos of these scientists proved giant squids are real and aggressive. They attack with lightning speed. The mystery that had puzzled humans for centuries was finally solved.

### **What Is Science Fiction?** Jules Verne's *20,000 Leagues*

*Under the Sea* is considered an adventure story. Adventure stories are a type of science fiction. Science fiction writing consists of:

- stories that involve technology or scientific advancements;
- settings that may or may not feel possible; and
- characters that might have imaginary powers or unusual abilities.

**Keep Reading:** Want to read more about the crew of the Nautilus and their underwater adventures?

- Visit: [Project Gutenberg](#)
- If you like *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*, then you might also like to read these science fiction adventure texts:
  - *Ender's Game* by Scott Card
  - *Dragon Pearl* by Yoon Ha Lee
  - *Zita the Spacegirl* by Ben Hatke

**Start Writing:** Inspired to write your own science fiction adventure story? Consider this prompt to get started:

- Make up your own story about an amazing vehicle that travels in a strange place (deep underground, inside a volcano, through time, etc.). Who is the captain? What is the mission?



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