

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea

Jules Verne



About the author

Jules Verne was born in Nantes, France, in 1828. His father sent him to Paris to study law at university. However, Verne gave up and started writing instead. He lived in poverty for ten years before his first success, *Five Weeks in a Balloon* (1862). *Journey to the Centre of the Earth* made him very popular in France, and soon his books were enjoyed by readers all around the world. He died in 1905. He had published over sixty works.

Summary

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea tells the story of three men who go to sea in search of a giant whale. They are taken prisoner on board the world's first submarine – the *Nautilus*.

The *Nautilus* travels through the world's seas. The men see amazing deep-sea creatures, and they travel to remote islands. They find sunken treasure, and they discover the lost world of Atlantis. They even travel under thick ice to the South Pole.

When the *Nautilus* enters a dangerous part of the sea called the Maelstrom, the three men escape in a small boat. They are rescued and taken to Norway, but they never find out if the submarine and its strange captain survived the Maelstrom.

Background and themes

Science and technology: Verne was one of the world's first 'science fiction' writers. When he wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, submarines didn't even exist!

Freedom: Aronnax learns many new things from Captain Nemo, and he enjoys his adventures. However, in the end, his freedom is more important, and he escapes with the others.

Different civilizations: Societies rise and fall. The Papuans represent an uncivilized society, and Atlantis is an example of a great civilization that has disappeared.

Discussion activities

Chapters 1–2

Before reading

- Discuss:** Ask students to look at the cover of the book. *What can you see? Can you see a person? What do you think happens in the story?*

After reading

- Pair work:** One student is Aronnax and the other is a journalist. They should work together to write questions and answers about the giant whale.

Chapters 3–5

Before reading

- Discuss:** Look at the picture on page 3. *Where are the men? What are they doing? How do they feel?*

After reading

- Role play:** Ask students to work in groups and role play the scene in which Aronnax, Conseil and Ned explore the coast. Direct them to focus on the last six paragraphs on page 12.

Chapters 6–7

Before reading

- Artwork:** Have students draw a picture of the South Pole.

After reading

- Write:** *Is Captain Nemo good or bad?* Get students to write a brief paragraph to answer this question and give reasons for their opinion.