

# **Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea Study Guide**

**Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne**

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## Overview

Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea begins with a mystery. For over a year, ocean-going vessels have reported running into a floating island or a submerged naval wreck, or being rammed by a giant whale. Pierre Aronnax, assistant professor at the Museum of Natural History in Paris, develops a theory to explain these confusing sightings; he believes that a huge narwhal is bedeviling these ships. After the Scotia, a Cunard Lines passenger ship, again encounters this "creature," the United States equips a speedy frigate, the Abraham Lincoln, to hunt and kill the dangerous beast. Because of his theory, Aronnax is invited to join the expedition along with Conseil, his servant. Ned Land, a famous Canadian harpooner, is brought along for his hunting skills.

After a long, unfruitful search, the Abraham Lincoln finally collides with the beast off the coast of Japan. Aronnax, Conseil, and Land are thrown overboard and grab hold of the monster's back to keep from drowning, only to discover that its skin is made of steel. The "creature" is actually a submarine.

The three are brought aboard the submarine, called the Nautilus, where they meet the mysterious Captain Nemo.

Their status on the ship seems ambiguous. Are they guests, as Nemo insists, or prisoners, as Ned Land begins to suspect? Nemo introduces them to the wonders of the underwater world. He shows them the lost continent of Atlantis and the wrecks he has plundered of gold. He takes them through a secret underwater passage from the Mediterranean to the Red Sea, a Suez passage where none existed in 1870.

Aronnax is fascinated by these underwater discoveries, but Ned Land becomes more impatient for his freedom.

When Nemo guides the Nautilus to the South Pole, the ship becomes entrapped in an ice pack. The Nautilus escapes from the ice, only to be attacked by a giant squid that nearly sinks the vessel.

Eventually, Aronnax's fascination with Nemo declines, as the Captain attacks passing ships, apparently for revenge or for greed. The Nautilus heads into northern waters, and the three captives plot their escape from Nemo's clutches, even as the ship blunders into a giant whirlpool.

## About the Author

Jules Verne was born on February 8, 1828, at Nantes, an industrial town on the Loire River in western France. His father, Pierre Verne, was a magistrate and his mother, Sophie Allotte de la Fuye Verne, was a descendant of an established, well-to-do French family.

Verne completed his legal training but never took over his father's law practice as intended. Instead, he pursued an interest in literature and drama. He began to write plays for production in the Parisian theatre, most of which were unsuccessful. In 1850, one of his plays (*The Broken Straws*) was successfully produced by the famous author Alexandre Dumas at the Theatre Historique. Verne served as secretary of the Theatre Lyrique in Paris from 1852 to 1854.

While still involved in the Parisian theater, Verne read Charles Baudelaire's translations of Edgar Allan Poe's short stories and began to write similar tales.

Verne thought that Poe's tales would have been more convincing if they had been more scientifically credible. Verne, however, did not really discover his own gift for writing scientific romances until 1857, when he married a widow with two daughters. He abruptly discarded his assumed bohemian poverty for a career as a stockbroker and continued to write plays, comedies, and stories.

In 1863 he published the first of what he called his *Voyages extraordinaires*, or fantastic voyages—*Cinq Semaines en ballon*, translated into English six years later as *Five Weeks in a Balloon*. The success of this story and the discovery of a reliable publisher, Jules Hetzel, made it possible for him to devote all of his time to writing. Over the next four decades he produced a series of incredible tales, sending his heroes to the moon, inside the earth, or under the sea, and became a wealthy man from the international sales of his stories and books. When he was unsure about the geography or scientific details of a story, Verne would consult his brother Paul, a sea captain with a head for engineering, who often helped design Verne's miraculous vehicles.

Unlike many struggling writers, Verne quickly won public acclaim. In 1870 he was awarded the Legion of Honor. After the 1870s, however, Verne's fantastic voyages, or scientific romances as they had come to be called, took on a gloomy cast. Some critics have blamed his growing pessimism on personal problems, such as difficulties with his son Michel, but it is more likely that he was increasingly disillusioned by the failure of science and technology to produce the Utopian world that he had envisioned.

Verne died at Amiens on March 24, 1905, from complications due to diabetes. He is remembered for anticipating many scientific advances—including helicopters, television, incandescent lighting, air conditioning, missiles, tanks, skyscrapers, the aqualung, and manned space flight—and for his contributions to the development of science fiction.



# Plot Summary

Stories about a giant sea monster that attacks and sinks ships at sea have captured the public's imagination. Professor Pierre Aronnax, a naturalist, has heard them too and is delighted to join an expedition that will hunt down the monster and destroy it. He takes along his devoted servant Conseil.

On board the *Abraham Lincoln* Aronnax enjoys the company of harpooner Ned Land, who does not believe in sea monsters. Just as the crew and captain are ready to give up their search, Land spots the monster, lit up like phosphorus and immensely huge. The minute Ned Land harpoons, he realizes he has hit a manmade object. It is a submarine.

The strange submarine sinks the *Abraham Lincoln*. Conseil, Ned Land and Aronnax manage to survive. They are taken aboard the *Nautilus* where they meet Captain Nemo. He is very hospitable and offers fine foods, art treasures, a vast library and comfortable accommodations. However, he demands that none of them ever leave the ship. Captain Nemo takes Aronnax on a detailed tour of the *Nautilus* and explains its technical marvels. Then the host awes his guest with a paneled saloon that has a totally fantastic view of the sea and its wildlife.

Captain Nemo invites the three prisoners for a hunt on the Island of Crespo. The island turns out to be underwater so Ned Land refuses to go. Captain Nemo provides breathing apparatus and wetsuits. Aronnax is enchanted by what he can see underwater, such as a forest and sea otters. However, they escape two formidable sharks.

In the next days they pass the shipwreck of the *Florida*, *Sunderland* and explore Vanikoro, where Le Perouse was lost at sea. The submarine hits a rock and has to wait for the tide to lift it. While they wait, Captain Nemo allows the three prisoners to go hunting on land on Gilboa. They have a great time, but are attacked by savages. When the savages touch the *Nautilus*, however, they receive a terrible electric shock.

Aronnax totally enjoys the adventure and the chance to study marine life up close. However, one night Captain Nemo deliberately drugs Aronnax and the others. The next morning he asks Aronnax to medically treat a dying man. Aronnax cannot save him and they have a funeral, underwater in a "coral cemetery."

Near the Island of Ceylon Captain Nemo and the others go pearl fishing. Captain Nemo intervenes to save a local fisherman from a shark, but almost dies himself until Ned Land saves the Captain by going after the shark.

The *Nautilus* enters the Red Sea. Captain Nemo knows of a secret passageway to the Mediterranean. It is dangerous but the ship makes it. Ned Land gets permission to kill a gigantic dugong. His harpoon only wounds it, but when the animal attacks, Land manages to kill it.



Captain Nemo has immense treasures in gold and silver looted from shipwrecks. When a local diver approaches, he prepares to give him a large treasure box, filled with gold. At Vigo Bay Captain Nemo loots even more treasure, which he says he uses to help oppressed people.

Captain Nemo and Aronnax take another underwater expedition. The host shows his guest the lost city of Atlantis, buried in volcanic lava and underwater coal mines, which help supply the *Nautilus* with its energy.

The *Nautilus* reaches the South Pole on March 21. Captain Nemo puts up his personal flag and claims the undiscovered land for himself. On its way back the *Nautilus* gets trapped in an ice tunnel. The crew almost dies for lack of air.

Later, Ned Land sees a giant squid and wants to kill it. Captain Nemo will allow it. The squid, however, attacks the ship and eats a sailor before the others can destroy it.

Captain Nemo finds the wreckage of the *Avenger*, but near this site the *Nautilus* is attacked by a foreign ship. Captain Nemo decides to use the submarine to tear this ship in two and everyone on board perishes. Captain Nemo seems to justify his terrible actions by referring to the fact he had to watch his entire family die.

This is too much for Aronnax, who agrees to join Conseil and Ned Land in an escape attempt the next night. As they try to board the little ship, it breaks free from the *Nautilus*. The submarine has hit a maelstrom which routinely destroys whales and ships. Aronnax and the others are rescued by local Norwegian fishermen, but the fates of Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus* are unknown.





# Part 1 Chapter 1

## Part 1 Chapter 1 Summary

Around the year 1866 sailors begin to report sightings of a strange object that is probably a whale. It is spindle-shaped and huge: about three miles long and a mile wide. It travels very fast, lights up at night and can spout water. These facts make the object unlike anything ever reported in the history of sea travel.

Sailors on the *Governor Higginson* saw it July 20, 1866, near Australia. Others aboard the *Columbus* observed it for three days between July 23 and July 27, 1866. Two weeks later "the monster" was spotted again by people aboard two steamers between the United States and Europe. They estimate it to be at least three hundred miles long. This unknown "monster" became very fashionable in the press as well as in theaters and songs. It caught the public's imagination all over the world.

Meanwhile, university professors and other scholars began to speculate about what the so-called "monster" could be. There were essays about the object in such journals as those from the Royal Academy of Science of Berlin and the Smithsonian Institute. Some believed it to be an island reef, a sea serpent, or a whale of unknown species.

On March 5, 1867, a ship called the *Moravian* hit what may have been a rock and damaged her keel. Then on April 13, 1867, the *Scotia* was struck by a sharp object that at first seemed very harmless. When the *Scotia* started to sink it was discovered to have a hole two yards in diameter on its bottom.

The sinking of the *Scotia* started a public outcry. Every recent shipwreck was blamed on the monster and that year there were over three thousand such wrecks. Everyone was becoming afraid to travel by ship. The public demanded that someone find the monster and kill it.

## Part 1 Chapter 1 Analysis

The book starts off with a factual, scientific tone. The reports of the monster and the attack on the *Moravian* are written in a factual journalistic style, as if it all really happened. There is a tension between public fascination with a "monster" and the scientists' search for a truthful explanation of extraordinary phenomenon.

By starting off in a factual detached tone, Verne attempts to make his story about science and truth seeking instead of a wild sea yarn. However, the book is ultimately a wild sea yarn.

Sea travel and shipping goods by sea were much more important to the 1860s world economy than it is today. It was the only way to travel and ship goods between continents. Any threat to the shipping industry would have been extremely critical. .



# Part 1 Chapter 2

## Part 1 Chapter 2 Summary

The narrator introduces himself as Pierre Aronnax, an assistant professor of the Museum of Natural History in Paris.

Aronnax is in New York City at the height of the controversy about the "sea monster." Nearly every theory of what it could be has been abandoned except for two: it is either a sea monster or a man-made vessel (submarine).

Aronnax has to rule out the idea of a man-made submarine. The thing would cost too much for a private party to make. If a nation had built it, other nations would know about it as part of their war intelligence-gathering. It would be impossible to hide a project of this immensity and scale with its potential as a war armament.

Aronnax decides it must be a "marine animal of enormous power." He writes an article for the *New York Herald* to that effect April 30. He writes that not all varieties of fishes are as yet identified. If you consider that the common narwhal can achieve lengths of sixty feet, it is not much of a stretch to imagine a creature ten times bigger. The sea has not been sufficiently explored by naturalists like Aronnax to rule out this possibility.

Aronnax's article receives wide acclaim. There are more calls for someone to rid the sea of this monster that is attacking ships.

Commander Farragut is commissioned to sail a large frigate named the *Abraham Lincoln* to look for and destroy the monster. Aronnax receives an invitation from the Secretary of Navy, J.B. Hobson, to join the expedition.

## Part 1 Chapter 2 Analysis

Again the tone of the chapter continues to be pseudo-scientific and factual, even though we are talking about a gigantic sea monster.

Aronnax emerges as a respected scientist who has already achieved some distinction in his field. Writing about the monster is a career risk for him that pays off. He is a young scientist, only forty years old, also as evidenced from the fact that he is only an assistant professor.



# Part 1 Chapter 3

## Part 1 Chapter 3 Summary

Forgetting his fatigue and other commitments, Aronnax decides his purpose in life must be to hunt down this monster the minute he gets his invitation from Hobson. He impulsively abandons all other plans to pursue the monster.

The first thing he does is to contact his trusted servant of ten years, Conseil, a Flemish boy age thirty. He orders Conseil to pack up traveling clothes for both of them as they are going on a journey. He considers Conseil to be loyal but thickheaded and he does not offer much explanation about why they will be going on the trip and how dangerous it might be for both of them.

Aronnax and Conseil board the *Abraham Lincoln*. Commander Farragut shows them around the boat, which is built for speed. The cabin Conseil and Aronnax will occupy proves to be large and comfortable.

Almost a half million people cheer the *Abraham Lincoln* as it departs with an escort of several small boats and tenders. It takes the ship several hours before it is deep into the Atlantic Ocean to begin its fantastic journey.

## Part 1 Chapter 3 Analysis

Aronnax is being impulsive when he joins the *Abraham Lincoln*. He even indulges in magical thinking (hardly appropriate for a scientist) that the expedition is God's will for his life. He says at first that he must warn Conseil about the dangers of the expedition, but he never does. He just orders Conseil to do what he says without much choice. Aronnax is a man who can be overtaken by a dream or notion and who is willing to risk his servant's life in the quest of this dream. His actions here foreshadow his later impulsivity and continuing relationship with Conseil.

*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* was published only twenty years after *Moby Dick*, another sea classic about a man's obsessive pursuit of a sea monster. However, *Moby Dick* was not a particularly popular book when it was first published.



# Part 1 Chapter 4

## Part 1 Chapter 4 Summary

Captain Farragut believes that the monster exists and puts out a two thousand dollar reward to the first person on the *Abraham Lincoln* who sees the monster. Everyone on ship with the exception of Conseil and Ned Land is very enthusiastic about the journey and finding the sea monster.

Aronnax enjoys the company of Ned Land, a forty-year-old master harpooner. Land is a Canadian who speaks French with Aronnax. He has been a seaman all his life and has many interesting tales about his adventures.

Aronnax wants to know why Ned Land does not believe in the monster. Land replies that he has seen too many whales in his life. They are not able to scratch the iron plates of steamer ships. Aronnax argues that the creature may have a large horn. Land is still skeptical.

Then Aronnax gives a long scientific explanation on water pressure on various size animals at various depths of the sea. This means that the creature must have an extremely strong resistant structure to withstand millions of pounds of pressure. It would be like hurling an express train against the hull of a ship: the ship would break. Yet Land is not convinced.

## Part 1 Chapter 4 Analysis

Captain Farragut's zeal to find the monster spills over to his crew. As Verne writes, "Farragut is the soul of the ship." Captain Farragut and Aronnax are both intelligent, educated men with interesting and responsible professions. The irony is that Ned Land does not believe in their sea monster theory. It is the salt-of-the earth man, the man who has little education and a lot of common sense, who cannot believe that a sea monster the size and scale described can possibly exist.



# Part 1 Chapter 5

## Part 1 Chapter 5 Summary

On June 30 the *Abraham Lincoln* encounters the *Monroe*, a whaling ship. The captain wants to borrow Ned Land, who happily harpoons two whales for him. On July 6 near Cape Horn the *Abraham Lincoln* is speeding in smooth waters with good weather when some sailors think they spot something. Nothing comes of it. On July 20 they cross the Tropic of Cancer and then travel for three months in the North Pacific. Everyone is discouraged. On November 2 Captain Farragut announces they will search only three more days for the monster and then, turn back home.

On November 5 the frigate is less than two hundred miles from Japan. By nightfall everyone is looking for the monster but it is not sighted. Aronnax teases Conseil that he should receive the reward money but there is no comforting Conseil. He wishes they were in France. Conseil would have had all of Aronnax's specimens classified by now and he is fairly sure that when they get back to France, everyone will laugh at them. Suddenly Ned Land shouts, "Ahoy! It is the thing we are looking for!"

## Part 1 Chapter 5 Analysis

The author uses the dramatic technique of putting a deadline on the search for the monster. This heightens suspense and makes the reader aware that the crew is ready to mutiny - they are tired of looking for something that does not exist. Aronnax has a patronizing attitude toward his servant Conseil. He does not respect Conseil's opinions. It is ironic that it is Ned Land who first sees the monster. Land is the one who does not believe in it.



# Part 1 Chapter 6

## Part 1 Chapter 6 Summary

The sight of the monster is truly amazing. It gives forth a strange light: Aronnax believes that the light must be electrical. He is amazed by its movement: forward, back and then again forward at a high velocity. The monster circles the *Abraham Lincoln* and lights it up with its strange light.

Aronnax and Captain Farragut speculate that they will have to use a torpedo to kill it because it is so big. Aronnax thinks it is a gigantic electric narwhal. The entire crew is up all night watching for it after it seems to disappear. They spot it at two in the morning. By daybreak its electric light cannot be seen. By eight in the morning, Aronnax gets a good look at it.

Aronnax perceives the length to be smaller than thought, only two hundred and fifty feet. The Captain consults with Ned Land. They decide to go for the monster with harpoons from the frigate itself, rather than sending out smaller boats after it.

Going at full steam the *Abraham Lincoln* chases the sea monster for four hours, but the monster swims agilely and at a speed of perhaps thirty miles per hour. The crew shoots at the narwhal but the bullets slide off the surface of the monster. It is now November 6 and night is falling. Aronnax figures they traveled at least three hundred miles in chase of the narwhal.

At eleven o'clock that night Captain Farragut is watching the narwhal asleep about three miles away from the *Abraham Lincoln*. The narwhal is giving off its light. The captain gives the order to sneak up on the monster while it is asleep. Ned Land, less than twenty feet from the narwhal, hurls his harpoon into it. To everyone's horror the harpoon strikes on a hard surface. The light goes out. There is a shock to the *Abraham Lincoln* and everyone aboard falls into the sea.

## Part 1 Chapter 6 Analysis

Aronnax and Captain Farragut appear to be very stubborn and headstrong in this chapter. They know they are up against an unusual enemy, a thing that nothing is known about, yet they proceed as if it is an ordinary whale. Also it is evident because of their many mistakes that they are overtired and not thinking clearly. Ned Land has the sense not to go after the monster in a small ship.



# Part 1 Chapter 7

## Part 1 Chapter 7 Summary

Aronnax is desperate in the dark, cold waters of the ocean. He is beginning to drown when the faithful Conseil lends him a hand. Conseil says the *Abraham Lincoln* has lost her screw and rudder: they were chewed by the monster's teeth.

Aronnax feels they are lost for good, but Conseil has the hope that they can swim at least several more hours. In that time they may be rescued. Conseil takes a knife to Aronnax's clothes so he can swim more easily. They take turns towing each other in the water so each can have intervals of rest. Conseil says they may be picked up by one of the *Abraham Lincoln's* small boats.

The ship wrecked about eleven at night. At one o'clock Aronnax is so tired he is ready to give up, but Conseil refuses to let go of his master. They see the *Abraham Lincoln* some five miles away.

Aronnax is almost ready to die. They hear a human voice, which turns out to be Ned Land's. He is actually standing on the "narwhal" he tried to harpoon and this is saving his life. Aronnax kicks the thing Ned Land talks about. It is indeed made of sheet metal. The submarine starts to move about seven feet above water. The three men try frantically to signal to whoever is inside the submarine. The night is now as black as coal.

By dawn Aronnax is able to examine the hull of the submarine. He notices that they are sinking. An iron plate lifts up and eight men come out and take Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land into the submarine.

## Part 1 Chapter 7 Analysis

In this exciting chapter, just fifty pages into the book, there is not only a major shipwreck, but also the discovery that the monster is not an animal at all but a man-made vessel. It loses its pseudo-scientific tone and becomes a narrative of an adventure.

Again there is the theme that the man with common sense has a better chance of survival than the intellectual. Ned Land helps all three survive because he is open to the idea that the monster is not an animal but a vessel. The only thing he is afraid of is that it will submerge and he will lose his footing. Aronnax would be dead without Conseil's help and Land's judgment.



# Part 1 Chapter 8

## Part 1 Chapter 8 Summary

Aronnax is convinced that they have been captured by pirates. The three men have climbed a ladder into utter darkness. Ned Land grumbles in frustration. They seem to be in a small room about ten by twenty feet with a table and chairs. Suddenly a bright light comes on that hurts their eyes.

Two men appear in the room. They are dressed in otter fur and speak in some strange language. Aronnax tries speaking in French and English. Conseil speaks in German and then Aronnax tries Latin. Nothing works. The two strangers leave. Ned Land thinks they are rascals. Aronnax says they are not English, French or German, but their dark complexions and mannerisms lead him to think they are Spanish, Arabian or Indian.

A man in a steward's uniform brings them clothes of every sort. While Land, Conseil and Aronnax put on dry garments, the steward arranges a table for them. He brings in exotic dishes of fish served on expensive silver dishes with covers. Every utensil is marked "Mobilis in Mobili N." Aronnax thinks "N" is the initial of the man who commands this strange boat. Ned Land and Conseil eat well and then sleep on the floor of the cabin. Aronnax is too riddled with questions to sleep at all. He finally does fall asleep, but has nightmares.

## Part 1 Chapter 8 Analysis

*Mobilis in Mobili* means "moving in a moving element" in Latin. The men are moving in the submarine, which is moving, so this is a good motto for the ship. Ned Land's reactions to being captured are visceral and direct. He believes these people are no good and have no right to capture them. This will be his attitude throughout the book. Aronnax is still being analytical and intellectual.





## Part 1 Chapter 9

### Part 1 Chapter 9 Summary

The air in the small cabin is very heavy. Aronnax with his scientific mind believes that because there are three men in the room consuming one hundred seventy-six pints of air each, the oxygen in the room has been depleted and they are breathing mostly carbon dioxide. Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land all wake up . They figure they have slept for one full day and are very hungry.

Ned Land grows more and more angry, while Conseil remains calm. The steward comes in the cabin. Land is so angry he jumps the steward and starts to strangle him. Another man speaks to them in perfect French: "Will you be so good as to listen to me?"

### Part 1 Chapter 9 Analysis

In this short chapter of only three pages, the characters of the men under extreme pressure are revealed: Conseil remains calm; Ned Land loses his temper; Aronnax analyzes everything in a scientific way.



# Part 1 Chapter 10

## Part 1 Chapter 10 Summary

Thus begins Aronnax's, Conseil's and Ned Land's first meeting with Captain Nemo. Captain Nemo accuses them of attacking his ship. Ned Land tried to harpoon them. He says that "an evil fate brought you into the presence of a man who has broken all ties that bound him to humankind."

Aronnax defends them by saying that they thought they were hunting and attacking a sea monster that has been wrecking ships. Captain Nemo counters by saying even so, you would have continued to attack my boat. For this reason, he considers them to be enemies and prisoners of war. He considers it within his rights to drown them. Aronnax said that would be the right of a savage, not a civilized man. Captain Nemo argues that he is outside the laws of humankind so it does not matter.

Captain Nemo promises not to drown them if they promise to obey his rules. He wants them to be consigned to their cabins at certain times. However, they will be free to wander around on board. They will never be allowed to leave the ship. Captain Nemo explains that since they have learned the secret of his existence, he cannot allow them to go back into the world. He assures Aronnax that he will not be bored. He possesses a huge library and will show him the marvels of the sea.

The company sits down to a splendid breakfast. Captain Nemo explains that everything he could possibly want is supplied by the sea. They eat many delicacies such as dolphin liver and anemone jam.

Captain Nemo talks about his love of the sea. He is happy in his world under the sea where there are no unjust laws or wars and where he can enjoy complete freedom. For a few minutes the man loses his cool demeanor and becomes animated when he talks about the sea. Then he goes back to being cold. He offers to take Aronnax on a tour of his ship.

## Part 1 Chapter 10 Analysis

This is our first introduction to Captain Nemo, one of the most fascinating characters in literature. He is the prototype of all the James Bond villains: the calculating alienated genius who creates his own world with its own rules. The name "Nemo" means "no one" in Latin.

Captain Nemo is rightly angry with these men who attacked his ship. Yet in exchange for their attack he is sentencing them to life in prison on board his ship. Ned Land immediately understands this and gets very angry. He promises to escape. Aronnax, on the other hand, wants to learn what Captain Nemo can teach. Captain Nemo is complex

and extremely intelligent. He lives his own philosophy. Yet he is someone who has been deeply hurt by life and is using his strange boat to escape civilization.



# Part 1 Chapter 11

## Part 1 Chapter 11 Summary

Captain Nemo first shows Aronnax his library. It is ingeniously fitted with light movable desks and boasts twelve thousand books. Aronnax will be allowed to use whatever books he wants and to write as he pleases. The two men share cigars made of seaweed. Aronnax finds the taste to be delightful. They go into a drawing room that is full of wonderful art treasures, including paintings by Raphael, da Vinci, Titian and other great masters.

Aronnax is even more impressed by Captain Nemo's collections of sea life such as echinoderms and mollusks. There are pearls the size of pigeon's eggs. Aronnax is enthralled with his shell collection. Next Captain Nemo shows him his quarters, which are next to his own. There is a large room with a bed, dressing table and other furniture. The captain's own quarters are stark in comparison.

## Part 1 Chapter 11 Analysis

Captain Nemo enjoys meeting Aronnax, an intellectual who appreciates his studies and collections. He enjoys showing off the *Nautilus* to another scientist. As a collector, Captain Nemo has now added Aronnax to his collection. Nemo emerges as a man who is very cultured, intelligent and appreciative of fine things like good cigars, fine art and beautiful music. It is ironic that such a person can be so inhumane in his dealings with others.



# Part 1 Chapter 12

## Part 1 Chapter 12 Summary

Captain Nemo has a lot of scientific instruments in his small austere room. Aronnax recognizes the thermometer and barometer. There is also a hygrometer that measures humidity, a sextant to show latitude and chronometers to show longitude. Another instrument is a manometer, which measures the depth of the ocean under the submarine.

The two men take a longer tour of the *Nautilus*. Captain Nemo explains that the ship manufactures its own electricity from seaweed. Electricity is used to pump air, give light and provide propulsion for the ship. Captain Nemo shows Aronnax the dining room, library, drawing room, kitchen, storerooms, furnaces and air reservoirs. He has a small boat available for use on the surface. When he uses the little boat, he stays connected to the *Nautilus* by an electric thread.

The engine room is very interesting. Its systems of levers and cogwheels provide rotary movement to a giant screw. The *Nautilus* achieves speeds up to fifty miles per hour.

When Aronnax asks how Captain Nemo turns and navigates the boat, his host agrees to explain because Aronnax will, after all, be spending his entire life on the submarine.

## Part 1 Chapter 12 Analysis

One of the reasons Jules Verne was such a popular author in his times, the 1880's, is that he can envision the future of technology. Submarines did exist in this period, but certainly not ones that were self-powered. In this sense the *Nautilus* anticipates today's nuclear submarines. Verne had a vision that someday mankind would realize the possibilities of ocean life - so far, this vision has not come to pass but it also seems as possible as a self-powered submarine. Verne anticipates electric clocks, lighting, instruments, etc long before they became practical.

Notice how the literary style is a mix of science and narrative. Verne writes about known science such as thermometers along with fantastic ideas like using seaweed to make electricity as if both were equally scientific. This gives the book an air of a "true life" story.



# Part 1 Chapter 13

## Part 1 Chapter 13 Summary

Captain Nemo and Aronnax relax over seaweed cigars as the host draws pictures to better explain the technology of the *Nautilus*. The ship is shaped like a cylinder with conical ends, which enables it to slide easily through the water. Captain Nemo gives Aronnax the boat's exact dimensions, construction and weight (over 1500 tons). He can sink the ship or let it rise by manipulating the amount of water in its reserves.

Captain Nemo can steer the *Nautilus* with an ordinary rudder. But he can move it horizontally and diagonally using the giant screw and inclined planes. He can also light up the sea for a half mile in front of the ship to see where he is going at night. Captain Nemo alleges that his collision with the *Scotia* was completely accidental. However, he had to defend himself when the *Abraham Lincoln* attacked his ship.

Aronnax exclaims that the *Nautilus* is the most wonderful boat ever made. Captain Nemo says he has complete trust in it since he is captain, builder and engineer. He was able to build it in secret because every part came from a different part of the globe. For example, the keel was forged in France and the engine was made in Germany. He set up workshops on desert islands in the ocean. He has spent millions of dollars on the ship, but money is nothing to him. He is wealthy enough to "pay the national debt of France."

## Part 1 Chapter 13 Analysis

This chapter like the preceding ones has a lot of technical material. There are sentences like "compression is only .000436 of an atmosphere for each 30 feet of depth" and "its area measures 6,032 feet; its contents 1,500 cubic yards... It displaces 50,000 feet of water or weighs 1,500 tons." These sentences can be boring to read but they lend an air of scientific credibility to the story. Verne makes the reader think that the *Nautilus* could exist.

Captain Nemo is enormously rich, but money does not matter to him. It is part of his misanthropy that he does not want to interact with human beings in human society. Money and other values of society mean nothing to him - he is the man who does not follow any rules except his own.



# Part 1 Chapter 14

## Part 1 Chapter 14 Summary

Captain Nemo has the *Nautilus* go to the surface where he and Aronnax stand on a platform. Aronnax notes the shape of the ship looks like a marine animal. The two men enjoy the view of the Japanese coastline.

They return to the interior of the boat. Aronnax retires to the saloon, where he reads about the wonders of the sea. There are rivers in the sea; the most interesting is the Gulf Stream. The *Nautilus* is following the current of the Kuro Shiwo near the Gulf of Bengal.

Conseil and Ned Land appear in the saloon. They are amazed at the museum quality artwork. Ned Land wants to know how many sailors are on board. Aronnax says to give up the idea of causing them to mutiny. As for himself, Aronnax is glad to experience the wonders of the *Nautilus*.

Suddenly the room turns dark. Then light breaks through two openings. They can see the sea for a mile around the *Nautilus*. Even Ned Land has to admit that the view is wonderful. They watch the currents and the ocean life as they move through the water. They take turns naming the fish they see: salamander, lamprey, aclostone, etc. Then there is daylight and the panels close. The view is lost. The three men retire to their chambers. Aronnax enjoys an evening of study and writing after a magnificent dinner of turtle soup.

## Part 1 Chapter 14 Analysis

The interaction between Aronnax and Ned Land foreshadows their conflicts later. Ned Land wants to organize the sailors on board the *Nautilus* and take over the ship so they can attain their freedom. Aronnax says "Most people would accept the situation - for the chance it gives them to live among such wonders." Aronnax really does not want to go anywhere.

When Verne writes about the beauty of the sea, he can move into the realm of poetry. For example, "What master hand paint the effects of light filtered through transparent sheets of water to represent the color of softness of successive gradations ...."



# Part 1 Chapter 15

## Part 1 Chapter 15 Summary

On November 9 Aronnax awakes. He wonders where Captain Nemo is; his host has been missing for two days. He passes the day studying shells and hoping that the panels in the saloon would again open so he can look at the "fairyland" of the sea.

By November 11 Aronnax is really wondering where Captain Nemo is. The *Nautilus* surfaces and Aronnax takes a walk in the sun. He sees a man who may be Captain Nemo but is not. The man speaks these strange words "Nautron respoc lorni virch." Five days pass. Each day Aronnax goes above, meets the same man who says the same mysterious words.

On November 16 Aronnax finds a note for him in his cabin. It is an invitation from Captain Nemo to go hunting on the island of Crespo. Ned and Conseil assume they are invited as well. Aronnax tries to locate the island on maps.

On November 17 Aronnax awakes to find Captain Nemo waiting for him. He makes no excuse for his eight-day absence. They have breakfast. Captain Nemo says it is possible to walk underwater with the proper apparatus consisting of an air reservoir and a strong helmet with tubes for inhaling and exhaling. You also have to carry a Ruhmkorff lamp so that you can see underwater. You carry an air rifle with special bullets made from glass of various sizes and weighted with lead. Aronnax, Ned Land and Conseil enter a cell where they put on the deep-sea walking gear.

## Part 1 Chapter 15 Analysis

Verne creates mystery around Captain Nemo by having him disappear without an excuse for days on end. When he does appear, it is through a letter mysteriously placed on the table of Aronnax's cabin. Captain Nemo is rude and self-serving in these behaviors, but again it does not matter to a man who follows no rules of etiquette or other human law.

Notice how Aronnax, the scientific man, has to have a complete explanation of the technology of the underwater walking gear. This gear had not yet been invented; Verne is ahead of his times which is why science fiction novels were so popular. He had the idea that anything a man could imagine, another man could invent.





# Part 1 Chapter 16

## Part 1 Chapter 16 Summary

Ned Land refuses to risk the dangers of the underwater walk. Conseil and Aronnax put on the strange "clothing." They meet with Captain Nemo and one of his strongest men. Other attendants shove each of the four men into a holding room full of water. A door opens and they can now walk on the bottom of the sea. Aronnax can barely describe the beauty of what he sees: a garden of sea flowers, incredible fish, a floor of shells and so forth.

The four men walk for about an hour and a half. Aronnax wishes he could talk about the marvels he is seeing with his companions. The rays of the sun help him tell time. Captain Nemo points out the entrance to the forest of Crespo.

## Part 1 Chapter 16 Analysis

This chapter is mostly poetic description of the beauty of underwater exploration. Today's modern divers take such exploration for granted; Jules Verne is about a hundred years ahead of his time with this chapter.



# Part 1 Chapter 17

## Part 1 Chapter 17 Summary

The forest of Crespo is made up of underwater tree plants that stretch up to the top of the ocean. Aronnax can barely contain his excitement about the strange sights in front of him. He tries to keep track of what he is seeing such as shrubs and fishes. After about four hours of walking, the men are tired and hungry. The sea walking is making them sleepy. They take a long nap.

Aronnax awakes after some hours to see a giant sea spider, which Captain Nemo's aide promptly kills. They continue to walk for more hours and are forced to use their lights. The things they are seeing are fantastic.

They find the shore of the island of Crespo and then they turn back by a different, steeper way. On the way back Captain Nemo fires and bags a sea otter. His attendant carries it back for him. Aronnax looks at thick clouds and realizes they are really varying thicknesses of the billows of the ocean. After many more hours they arrive near the *Nautilus*. Captain Nemo is hurrying very fast and suddenly grabs him and Conseil, pulling them down. Overhead are two enormous sharks, so close their fins almost brush the men. They return to the *Nautilus* where aides help them change out of their heavy gear.

## Part 1 Chapter 17 Analysis

Aronnax is clearly having the time of his life and wants to continue the adventure. He thoroughly enjoys the island of Crespo as an adventure and an intellectual experience of ocean life. Captain Nemo's experience is evident in that he is the one who saves the party from being eaten by sharks. The descriptions of undersea life take up most of the chapter and are quite poetic.



# Part 1 Chapter 18

## Part 1 Chapter 18 Summary

Aronnax is enjoying his morning walk in terrestrial air when Captain Nemo joins him. The sailors on the *Nautilus* are casting nets for fish. Captain Nemo again talks about his mystical relationship with the sea. He asks Aronnax if he knows anything about the depth of the ocean. Aronnax gives estimates, but Captain Nemo is more knowledgeable.

After that Aronnax does not see Captain Nemo for weeks. He enjoys his studies and never tires of looking at the sea through the panels of the saloon. November passes into December. Aronnax is enjoying "the most wonderful sights on the globe" in their long southwesterly journey.

One night as Aronnax is reading a good book, Ned Land interrupts. He feels irritated but gets up to see what Ned Land has to show him. It is a large black mass illuminated in the lights of the *Nautilus* that turns out to be the hull of a sunken ship. Aronnax sees corpses, some still fresh and even one of a woman. The ship is marked *Florida, Sunderland*.

## Part 1 Chapter 18 Analysis

Verne paints a picture of Aronnax being content to explore the sea and do his intellectual research and reading. Meanwhile Ned Land sees everything in a more foreboding way. Aronnax would have missed the spectacle of the fresh corpses and sunken ship if Ned Land had not aroused him forcibly. On a symbolic level Aronnax is missing Captain Nemo's evil because he shares his intellectual values.



# Part 1 Chapter 19

## Part 1 Chapter 19 Summary

Aronnax says he saw many other shipwrecks as well as hundreds of manmade items at the bottom of the sea as the *Nautilus* traveled its course. On December 11 they come to the Paumotou Islands, which may someday help to form a fifth continent. Aronnax is fascinated by the coral formations and there is a long dissertation about them and madrepores, which are often confused with corals. The *Nautilus* moves through the Tropic of Cancer and toward Tahiti by December 15. Later that week no one celebrates Christmas, which bothers Ned Land.

On the 27th Captain Nemo meets with Aronnax and tells him they are near the Island of Vanikoro. This is where, in 1785, La Perouse was lost, with the ships *Boussole* and *Astrolabe*. It is a large volcanic island. The French government sent two ships, the *Recherche* and *Esperance*, to find them to no avail. In May, 1854 a Captain Dillon discovered that La Perouse may have been lost near Vanikoro. He journeyed there himself on another ship called the *Recherche* and found the wreck of the La Perouse expedition. In 1828 the *Astrolabe* went to Vanikoro. The officers toured the island and questioned the savages there, who told them lies because they were afraid that Dumont d'Urville of the *Astrolabe* would kill them. D'Urville was able to find out that La Perouse had built himself a small ship that is unaccounted for.

Captain Nemo says he does not believe the story. They go into the saloon and look through the panels. Captain Nemo says the truth is that Le Perouse's two ships were indeed wrecked, but the survivors built a third ship out of the wreckage. Then Captain Nemo shows Aronnax a tin box with papers of Commander La Perouse. Captain Nemo recovered the relic himself some time ago.

## Part 1 Chapter 19 Analysis

The story of Le Perouse is recounted in detail, although it is not that interesting. The point is that Captain Nemo knows a lot more about the sea and its legends than anyone else on the planet. From a literary point of view, the Le Perouse story is dark and full of death like the shipwreck in the preceding chapter, the sharks in the chapter before that and so forth. These stories and images set a dark dismal tone.



# Part 1 Chapter 20

## Part 1 Chapter 20 Summary

Conseil wishes Aronnax a "happy new year." Aronnax has never been happier and Conseil says "we have no time for boredom - the next marvel is always the most wonderful." Aronnax figures they have traveled over 11,340 miles as they enter the Coral Sea. Aronnax is again amazed at the variety of fish and ocean life, which he carefully categorizes. The *Nautilus* moves into the Torres Straits that are choked by innumerable islands and rocks.

Aronnax goes outside on the platform where he meets Ned Land, who complains about the roughness of the sea. Aronnax feels a little strange because they are near the route of the ill-fated *Astrolabe*. Suddenly they hit a rock and have to halt the ship. Captain Nemo assures them they are all right and will continue through the night.

Ned Land tells Aronnax he does not feel safe on this scrapheap of metal. They should not be traveling at night like this. What's more they are near some islands. Ned Land wants to get off and go hunting for real meat - he is sick of eating fish.

To Aronnax's surprise, Captain Nemo will allow them to go hunting on an island. Ned Land is ecstatic to get out of the *Nautilus*. Conseil, Aronnax and Ned Land take out the small boat to an island. They negotiate the coral reef and land on the island of Gilboa.

## Part 1 Chapter 20 Analysis

Aronnax is enjoying himself on the *Nautilus* but Ned Land is clearly miserable. The reader may understand by now that Ned Land will not last much longer as a prisoner, but Aronnax is ignoring his plight. Like the stereotypical intellectual, Aronnax is in his own world of fishes and corals.



# Part 1 Chapter 21

## Part 1 Chapter 21 Summary

Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land are incredibly happy to set foot on land again, after being held prisoner on a submarine for two straight months. They joyfully eat coconuts and collect fruits and vegetables to take back with them but are unable to take any animal meat.

The three return to the ship around five in the afternoon. They hope to return to the island the next day. They embark again on the little boat to Gilboa. They find a very luxuriant forest full of parrots and enjoy eating a pigeon and woodcock for lunch.

That afternoon they feel very exuberant as they walk around the beautiful island looking for potential meat. They find a bird that is drunk on nutmeg. It is so dizzy that the big three-foot long bird is staggering on the ground, too drunk to fly.

The Canadian, Ned Land, manages to kill an animal something like a hog and six rodents. They have a magnificent meal of meat and bird. Ned Land says "Let's never return to the *Nautilus!*" But just as he speaks he is hit by a rock.

## Part 1 Chapter 21 Analysis

This chapter is probably meant to be funny, but nineteenth century humor does not always carry into modern times. Nevertheless Ned Land emerges as an exuberant man full of life and joy as he goes hunting and enjoys his food. His name -Land-is symbolic of where he belongs.



# Part 1 Chapter 22

## Part 1 Chapter 22 Summary

The first stone yields to another one. Savages are attacking Ned Land, Conseil and Aronnax not only with stones but also arrows and other weaponry. They run madly away from the savages and toward their little boat, which is sixty feet away. Ned Land refuses to leave his meat behind and tows it with him. The three scramble toward the *Nautilus*. They are scared at the savages who keep chasing them. Some are waist deep in the water.

Back on the *Nautilus* Aronnax complains to Captain Nemo of their brush with the savages. Captain Nemo seems nonplused: what do you expect? All men are savages. Captain Nemo returns to his playing of the organ.

The next day about five hundred savages are approaching the *Nautilus*. They seem very interested in it. Because of the savages the three men cannot go back to Gilboa, which saddens Ned Land very much. Aronnax decides to spend his time dragging the waters for shells. Conseil helps him. Aronnax gives a loud cry of amazement when he finds one that is swirled backwards. They were thinking in terms of making a fortune on the shell by selling it to a museum when a native shatters it by throwing a stone. Aronnax had to hold Conseil back or else he would kill the native.

Back on the *Nautilus*, Aronnax is very concerned at the numbers of natives who have come out in canoes. He fears they will attack the *Nautilus*. When he tells this to Captain Nemo, Captain Nemo says it does not matter: the *Nautilus* is equipped for such emergencies. They talk about D'urville and how he must have met his fate so near this place. The next day Aronnax is again worried about the savages climbing on to the *Nautilus*. Ned Land is in his glory: he is cooking kangaroo pie.

Aronnax again expresses concerns to Captain Nemo. Captain Nemo takes him below and shows him how the savages are trying to board the *Nautilus* but each one meets with the same fate: a bolt of electricity. Unfortunately so does Ned Land. It is not enough to kill anyone but it is frightening and unexpected. At twenty minutes to three, the exact hour Captain Nemo promised, the *Nautilus* leaves the Straits of Torres.

## Part 1 Chapter 22 Analysis

In many ways *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* is not one story but rather a series of little episodes as the three prisoners and the crew travel in the *Nautilus*. Each little story has a beginning, middle and ending. This one starts with the natives attacking the three prisoners on Gilboa, continuing to attack the *Nautilus* and then Captain Nemo ending it all with electric shocks. Captain Nemo makes no distinction between the savages of Gilboa and the citizens of England. To his twisted mind, all men are the same and all men are bad.



# Part 1 Chapter 23

## Part 1 Chapter 23 Summary

It is January 10 and the *Nautilus* is approaching Cape Wessel. Aronnax notes that the ship has no trouble navigating the Victoria reefs there. By January 13 the ship is in the Indian Ocean. Aronnax wonders where they are going. Asia? Europe? The Cape of Good Hope? By January 14 the ship is nowhere near any landmass at all. Meanwhile Captain Nemo is conducting experiments on the temperature of the sea. He dives to the bottom himself and makes measurements.

The *Nautilus* runs into some technical problems and has to stay put a day or two. Aronnax looks through the panels and sees that they are in a great mass of phosphorescence filled with sea animals. It is a dazzling scene to watch. The *Nautilus* continues on its journey; Aronnax continues to enjoy the sights that pass by.

On January 18 the weather is bad. Aronnax goes up to the platform and finds Captain Nemo looking through a telescope with total concentration. Aronnax cannot see a thing on the horizon and wonders what is holding Captain Nemo's attention so intently. A lieutenant is likewise staring into a telescope. Aronnax goes to his room and retrieves his own telescope. Just as Aronnax begins to take a look, someone grabs the telescope from his hands. Captain Nemo is very angry; he orders Aronnax to his room.

Aronnax goes down and tells Conseil and Ned Land what has happened. No one can figure out this newest mystery. The next morning Captain Nemo brings them breakfast. This time he is in a good mood. After they eat their breakfast, Conseil, Ned Land and Aronnax feel very drowsy. The food was poisoned with sleeping medicine.

## Part 1 Chapter 23 Analysis

In this chapter the reader again can enjoy poetic descriptions of corals and sea animals. The writing is very literary and lovely. No one can ever really make friends with Captain Nemo. He is full of secrets and mysteries. In this chapter he has drugged his prisoners.





# Part 1 Chapter 24

## Part 1 Chapter 24 Summary

The next morning the effects of the drugs wear off. About two in the afternoon Captain Nemo appears to Aronnax and asks him if he is a physician as well as a scientist. Aronnax says he is. The two men go downstairs to the sailors' quarters. A man about forty is bleeding from a terrible wound. His skull is shattered and his brain is exposed. Captain Nemo explains that the man was injured by one of the levers of an engine. Aronnax says nothing can be done: the man will die within a few hours. Aronnax passes the rest of the day with anxiety over what has happened recently. He has no explanation for the events.

The next morning Captain Nemo meets Aronnax on the bridge. Would he and his friends like to make a submarine excursion? Aronnax agrees and even Ned Land goes along. They again put on the underwater gear and dive below. This time they are exploring "coral kingdom." Aronnax is enthralled by the beauty and appreciates the rarity of the coral he is seeing. Three hundred yards is the extreme depth for coral formation but yet there is a "huge forest of mineral vegetations" that Aronnax calls "an ineffable spectacle!" They go into a glade of coral with a strange coral cross. There are mounds everywhere. Captain Nemo signals and a sailor digs a hole. Then Aronnax realizes he is in a strange cemetery and they are burying the man who died earlier. Indeed Captain Nemo and the others kneel in prayer as they bury the corpse. Back in the *Nautilus* Captain Nemo admits that the place is a cemetery. He bursts into tears and cannot suppress his sobs. This ends Part 1.

## Part 1 Chapter 24 Analysis

Part I ends with the mystery of why the sailor died and why the three passengers were drugged and confined to their rooms. It is also a mystery as to why Captain Nemo allowed the three prisoners to watch his strange funeral.

Captain Nemo again emerges as a very complex person who is capable of loving and mourning a fellow sailor but at the same time he can also treat Aronnax and his companions in the most cruel way possible. This chapter contains long passages and descriptions of coral.



# Part 2 Chapter 1

## Part 2 Chapter 1 Summary

Conseil believes Captain Nemo is a misunderstood genius who has grown tired of the world of man so retreated to the sea. But Aronnax is not so sure. He is troubled by recent events and has the thought that Captain Nemo is filled with hate and seeking revenge, for some reason as yet unknown to him.

The *Nautilus* travels through January. Aronnax is never bored for he enjoys the sea and his studies. On January 24 the ship comes to Keeling Island, a place explored by Darwin. Here they do some fishing. On January 25 the ship stays on the surface of the ocean, so Aronnax enjoys walking on the platform in the open air. In the evening he and Conseil enjoy the sight of hundreds of Argonauts. The next day they pass over the equator as they are followed by many sharks that Ned Land wants very much to harpoon.

In the Bay of Bengal Aronnax sees many bodies floating that had been put in the holy Ganges River to be carried out to sea. That evening they seem to be floating in a sea of milk which is actually a large area of white waves caused by the presence of small worms. Aronnax explains this to Conseil.

## Part 2 Chapter 1 Analysis

This chapter is similar to many in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Most of it is description of the sea and marine life and there is no narrative. In chapters like this one, the book reads like Aronnax's journal or diary of his travels. In the original French version of this book, there were many many more descriptions. These were cut from other editions because they were deemed too boring to the average reader.



## Part 2 Chapter 2

### Part 2 Chapter 2 Summary

On February 28 the *Nautilus* reaches the Island of Ceylon. Captain Nemo offers to show Aronnax the pearl fisheries there. He asks if Aronnax objects to hunting sharks. Aronnax does but he does not let on that this is the case. Aronnax goes into a long explanation of the intricacies of pearl hunting with Conseil and Ned Land. He also explains their evaluation, how they are found and opened and other details.

To a poet, a pearl is the teardrop of the sea. To naturalists, it is a secretion of the organ that produces the mother-of-pearl in bivalves. To women, it is an ornament. Sometimes you need pincers to pull a pearl from a shell. There are round and oval pearls of different sizes and colors. The only problem is that pearl hunting often involves sharks. Ned Land is not afraid. He will enjoy the hunt and is looking forward to harpooning sharks. Conseil will do whatever Aronnax wants of him.

### Part 2 Chapter 2 Analysis

Again the book takes a dark foreboding tone with the long discussions of sharks and how they seize men and eat them. The sharks contrast with the beauty of the pearls. This is a typical literary device used throughout the book: the tenebrous quality of Captain Nemo's life and the prison that is the *Nautilus* contrasting with the beauty of nature.



## Part 2 Chapter 3

### Part 2 Chapter 3 Summary

Captain Nemo leads Ned Land, Aronnax and others to the small boat where they embark on a short trip to the Island. Captain Nemo does not speak during the trip. They anchor at a small bay and get out. They dress again in their rubber suits and helmets for diving. Aronnax is afraid of sharks and fearful that his knife will not be an adequate weapon. Ned Land takes a harpoon.

They find a cache where there are literally millions of oysters filled with pearls of all sizes. They begin to collect them in their nets. Captain Nemo leads them to a large underwater grotto where Aronnax finds an oyster that contains perhaps thirty pounds of meat and a pearl the size of a coconut. Aronnax wants to harvest the pearl that he estimates is worth over two million dollars but Captain Nemo warns him to leave it by pulling out his dagger. Aronnax realizes that his host wants to allow the pearl to grow even bigger.

Captain Nemo signals them to duck down and hide; Aronnax assumes there are sharks. Instead he sees an old Indian fisherman, diving without equipment and thus holding his breath underwater. The fisherman was harvesting oysters and then putting them in his small canoe.

Suddenly a huge shark attacks the fisherman who tries to climb into his boat. Captain Nemo springs into action and attacks the shark with his knife. A terrible battle ensues between the shark and the Captain. Aronnax freezes in horror. However, just as the shark was ready to eat his enemy, Ned Land kills it with his harpoon.

Captain Nemo gives the Cingalese fisherman artificial respiration until he revives. Then he offers him a bag of pearls. He thanks Ned Land for saving his own life. Ned Land replies you did the same for me once.

They return to the *Nautilus* and watch other sharks eat the body of the shark they killed. Aronnax comments to Captain Nemo that he has much humanity left in him: he almost lost his life trying to save that poor man. His host replies that the fisherman is one of the oppressed people of the world like himself.

### Part 2 Chapter 3 Analysis

The shark episode reveals Captain Nemo's complexity. As a man who renounced mankind, Captain Nemo nevertheless is willing to put his life on the line for a stranger. He later explains he identifies with oppressed people. His action shows incredible courage. Again Aronnax, the man of intellect, freezes when someone needs help whereas the impulsive Ned Land plunges into action without thinking.



This chapter like nearly all in the book does contain descriptions of underwater life. Jules Verne went to the library every afternoon and looked up marine life in different oceans so as to be accurate. There are long passages with sentences like this one: "There were panopyres, slightly luminous and lastly some Oculinidae spread out like gorgeous fans and forming one of the richest vegetations in all the oceans."



## Part 2 Chapter 4

### Part 2 Chapter 4 Summary

The *Nautilus* leaves the Island of Ceylon January 29 and spends the next week near the Persian Gulf and the Sea of Onan. Ned Land grumbles he has no idea where they are going; Aronnax says he loves the journey.

The submarine enters the Red Sea. Aronnax finds the lost city of Mocha. They move along the African coast. Aronnax enjoys the view and writes long descriptions of mollusks, sponges, gobies, etc. He and Captain Nemo chat about the Red Sea and the history of naval transportation. Captain Nemo attributes the color of the sea to microscopic seaweed. He gives a long history of the Suez Canal as first begun by King Sesostris in 615 B.C. He regrets that they are not going to the Suez Canal, but he is taking them to the Mediterranean tomorrow.

Aronnax can hardly believe the *Nautilus* can travel so fast as to reach the Mediterranean by the day after tomorrow. Captain Nemo says it's not a problem: they will travel under the isthmus. He calls it the "Arabian Tunnel" and it goes underneath the Suez and opens in the Gulf of Pelusium. He discovered the tunnel by studying the fishes in the region. Then Captain Nemo actually put rings on some of the fishes to track their movements. When he found the fishes with his rings on the coast of Syria, he knew his theory was correct.

### Part 2 Chapter 4 Analysis

Captain Nemo again proves his genius and daring as a sea captain. Yet he operates as a scientist: he has a hypothesis (i.e., that there must be an undersea passageway) and then he goes ahead and proves it through careful experimentation (i.e., by placing rings on the tails of fishes that travel in the same area).



## Part 2 Chapter 5

### Part 2 Chapter 5 Summary

The *Nautilus* continues its journey on the Arabian coast. Aronnax sees the city of Jidda and other sights. On February 10 Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land are on the platform when Ned Land points out a long low black moving mass in the water. It is a huge dugong and Ned Land wants very much to harpoon it. Captain Nemo appears and gives him permission. The problem is that the dugong is dangerous when wounded so there is a risk involved.

Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land climb into the small boat with several others. They move within six yards of the animal, which is about seven yards long and has two large tusks. Ned Land throws his harpoon and the animal disappears underwater. It has been wounded. The dugong comes up and down several times; each time Land throws a harpoon and misses.

Then the dugong circled the boat and attacked it. Everyone on board gets thrown around but luckily Ned Land hits the animal in its heart with his harpoon. The dugong weighs ten thousand pounds and provides much food for the *Nautilus*.

A few days later the *Nautilus* moves into the Straits of Jubal near the Gulf of Suez. Aronnax enjoys the sight of the floating lighthouse of Suez. The *Nautilus* has to submerge to go through the "Arabian Tunnel." Captain Nemo must use extreme concentration to guide the ship through the passageway. Aronnax writes it is like going into the jaws of hell. It takes about a half hour for the *Nautilus* to make its way through the tunnel. Afterward Captain Nemo says simply, "The Mediterranean."

### Part 2 Chapter 5 Analysis

Captain Nemo's passage through the Arabian Tunnel to the Mediterranean is bold and dangerous. He is a man of physical and mental courage. Being in the Mediterranean is a bright passage for Ned Land: now he can think of escape from a blackness he hates. Why does Captain Nemo allow Ned Land to spear the dugong? One wonders if it is just about meat or if he perceives the harpooner's need to ply his trade.



## Part 2 Chapter 6

### Part 2 Chapter 6 Summary

Once the *Nautilus* is in the Mediterranean Sea, Ned Land begins his campaign for the three prisoners to escape. He and Aronnax talk bluntly and honestly. Aronnax is not ready to leave; perhaps in six months he will want to go with Ned Land. Land asks if Captain Nemo were to give him his freedom, would he take it? Aronnax is not sure.

Aronnax says if they try to escape, they will have to be successful the first time. Ned Land thinks they should try the minute they get within swimming distance of any European coast. Aronnax doubts if Captain Nemo will let them get that close. The captain is no fool; he knows they want to escape. Ned Land concludes they don't have a "ghost of a chance." Furthermore, Captain Nemo seems to distrust them. The closer they are to European waters, the more often the *Nautilus* stays submerged.

On February 14 the ship is near the Island of Carpathos. Aronnax writes a long description of fish and plant life in the area. As he is studying marine life, he sees a strange diver. At first he thinks it's not human. Then he rushes to Captain Nemo and says they must rescue this person. Captain Nemo knows the diver as Nicholas Pesca of Cape Matapan.

Captain Nemo goes to a secret place and pulls out a chest full of gold ingots. Aronnax estimates the chest to weigh over a thousand pounds and for the gold to be worth at least a million dollars. Captain Nemo writes an address on the chest in Greek and then orders his men to take the chest up a staircase. The next day Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land try to figure out where Captain Nemo sells his gold.

The temperature on the ship becomes unbearably hot. They are floating in a sea of "boiling water" near the Island of Santorin. Captain Nemo tells Aronnax that the sea is always changing because of volcanic eruptions. Captain Nemo shows him where they are on charts. Aronnax says he cannot bear the intense heat much longer. The ship surfaces. Aronnax thinks that if he and Ned Land had tried to swim in this sea, they would have perished.

### Part 2 Chapter 6 Analysis

Captain Nemo is not only a master seaman in the ordinary sense; he also has a great understanding of submarine seamanship. He knows just when and where to leave certain spots that have never been explored widely by other people. Captain Nemo is still a mysterious creature who knows how to raise millions of dollars and have commerce with people on land.





## Part 2 Chapter 7

### Part 2 Chapter 7 Summary

The *Nautilus* is now in the Mediterranean Sea but it is moving very fast. Ned Land grumbles that there is no way they can escape at that speed - it would be like jumping off a speeding train. Aronnax provides more descriptions of the marine life such as lampreys more than a yard long, oxyrhynchi and many others.

Aronnax shows Conseil a map to find their location. They are on a reef that forms a bar to the Straits of Libya. They chat about other things, until Aronnax explains that someday the earth will become a cold corpse because the sun's energy is depleting. By February 18 they pass through the Straits of Gibraltar. Aronnax describes the ruins of the temple of Hercules.

### Part 2 Chapter 7 Analysis

This is a short chapter that forms a bridge between two chapters that contain more action and story. The only thing to note is that Aronnax has a deep pessimism about the future of the earth based on the longevity of the sun. Unlike moderns, he is worried about global "cooling."



## Part 2 Chapter 8

### Part 2 Chapter 8 Summary

Aronnax notes that the *Nautilus* has traveled 10,000 leagues so far. This is a distance greater than the earth's circumference. The ship is near the tip of a peninsula in Spain called Vigo Bay when Ned Land and Aronnax meet again. Aronnax tries to reassure Ned Land that the voyage is worthwhile. Ned Land says that the escape is set for that night at 9 o'clock. Aronnax says the sea is bad. Ned Land replies they are going to escape anyway.

Aronnax feels badly about fooling Captain Nemo, who has been a wonderful host and a person of infinite interest to him. He wonders how Captain Nemo will react and feel about their escape. Will he be hurt? Will he try to go after them? Nevertheless Aronnax dresses up in otter and sealskins to prepare himself for the escape. The *Nautilus* is at the bottom of the sea.

Uncharacteristically, Captain Nemo comes over to chat with Aronnax. He feels threatened by this because of his escape plans. Captain Nemo asks Aronnax in a friendly way about what he knows of Spanish history. They chat about a battle that took place in the very spot of Vigo Bay under Admiral Chateau-Renaut on October 22, 1702. Supposedly there is sunken treasure. Now Aronnax watches Captain Nemo's men as they remove this treasure from the Bay.

Aronnax says that it is a shame that these riches - and there must be millions upon millions of dollars worth of treasure from these lost Spanish galleons - these riches should be used for some noble purpose. Captain Nemo gets very defensive and replies why do you think that he himself is not going to use the treasure to help oppressed people? Aronnax believes that Captain Nemo does indeed support such charity from the loot he steals from the sea.

### Part 2 Chapter 8 Analysis

It is interesting to note that Aronnax really cares about Captain Nemo's feelings if they should manage to escape. He is a decent enough person to believe he is being an ungrateful guest to leave his host. In truth he is a prisoner trying to escape. Aronnax also right away assumes that Captain Nemo is using his stolen millions to help the oppressed people of the world. From a literary standpoint, Verne built up suspense about the planned escape and had it ruined by the unlikely appearance of Captain Nemo.



## Part 2 Chapter 9

### Part 2 Chapter 9 Summary

Ned Land is really disappointed that the untoward appearance of Captain Nemo at the wrong hour ruined their escape plans. Aronnax tells Ned Land about Captain Nemo's treasures. The *Nautilus* is traveling very fast and very much the wrong way for their escape. These facts enrage Ned Land who wants to escape badly. Captain Nemo invites Aronnax to explore the sea at night with them. They suit up but do not carry lamps, which would be useless.

Captain Nemo leads Aronnax around for about an hour between midnight and 1 A.M. There is a strange red light that helps Aronnax to see a fascinating forest of rocks and strange plants. They come across giant lobsters and other strange creatures. Captain Nemo signals to Aronnax to climb a little higher. The reddish light turns out to be a volcano. Aronnax sees the remains of an ancient town destroyed by a volcano. He recognizes a Greek aqueduct. Captain Nemo writes the word "Atlantis" on the ground.

### Part 2 Chapter 9 Analysis

This is an interesting and imaginative twist: Captain Nemo knows where the lost city of Atlantis is and no one else does. Aronnax is more interested in the plants and animals than the city. The volcano in this chapter foreshadows other parts about volcanoes and underwater terrain.



## Part 2 Chapter 10

### Part 2 Chapter 10 Summary

Aronnax is continually looking out at the sea but he cannot figure out where they are. He is seeing prairies and mountains and marine life. Then there is total darkness. The *Nautilus* is in the center of a lake formed by an inactive volcano. Captain Nemo likes it because it is a resting place from winds and currents. Captain Nemo has discovered an underground passageway to the lake.

Most importantly, the area is a huge reservoir of coal. The *Nautilus* takes these coal reserves and uses it as fuel to create electricity. Captain Nemo sends men to mine the coal. Ned Land, Aronnax and Conseil walk around the lake and explore the interior of the volcano. They kill some birds and encounter bees. Ned Land is in a very bad mood because of his obsession with escaping. Captain Nemo leaves the area in the dead of night in order to hide the fact of the submarine passageway there.

### Part 2 Chapter 10 Analysis

This chapter gives us the explanation of how the *Nautilus* can keep moving indefinitely. It is not just about converting seaweed to electricity but using coal to create electricity. Ned Land is growing more frustrated every day but Aronnax continues to ignore his plight.



# Part 2 Chapter 11

## Part 2 Chapter 11 Summary

Sargasso is a Spanish word for sea kelp. The *Nautilus* has entered the Sargasso Sea on February 22. The kelp and other marine life create a strange color to the water. From February 23 to March 12 the *Nautilus* is traveling in the mid-Atlantic.

Aronnax considers simply asking Captain Nemo for his freedom when the voyage ends. He wonders how he will approach the subject. He knows that if he gives Captain Nemo his word that he will never tell anyone about the *Nautilus*, Captain Nemo will trust him as an honorable man. It is a delicate situation. He has kept silent so long that Captain Nemo may believe he is really happy traveling with him. The ship passes through grottoes and rock formations. Captain Nemo allows Aronnax to photograph the area. Aronnax is thrilled.

A whaling ship chases the *Nautilus*. The crew probably believes it to be a gigantic whale or sea animal. Captain Nemo solves the problem by submerging. The water in this area is very deep. Captain Nemo wonders if he can get to the bottom of the ocean. The record is held by a Lieutenant Parker of the frigate *Congress*, but Captain Nemo allows the *Nautilus* to break that record. Parker could not touch ground with a line 15,000 feet long.

The *Nautilus* keeps diving until Aronnax begins to worry about the intense pressure on the ship. Finally Captain Nemo signals for the ship to go back up. It shoots up like a bullet and Aronnax is thrown to the floor. In four minutes it moves four leagues upwards.

## Part 2 Chapter 11 Analysis

Aronnax can be timid in many ways. He can be physically cowardly, such as when he demonstrated a fear of sharks. But he is also cowardly socially, in that he is afraid to talk honestly with Captain Nemo. Captain Nemo's experiment with ocean diving shows him to be a daring person.



## Part 2 Chapter 12

### Part 2 Chapter 12 Summary

It is now March 13. Aronnax wonders where the *Nautilus* is heading and hopes it is not the South Pole. Ned Land has been less communicative lately. On March 14 he poses the idea that they should find out how many men are on board the *Nautilus*. He has a hunch that many of these sailors are like Captain Nemo: people who have "renounced every tie that binds them to earth." Aronnax tries to work the problem out mathematically, based upon the amount of air in the submarine and the amount needed for each person to breathe. The maximum number would be 625, but there is probably only a tenth of that.

Conseil makes a plea for Ned Land's case, to leave. He argues that the harpooner is not a scholar like Aronnax, but would give his life to get to a tavern again and to have all the things he's left behind. Later they are on the platform watching a quiet sea. Ned Land spots a whale. This begins a long conversation with Conseil and Aronnax about different kinds of whales. Captain Nemo approaches and Ned Land asks permission to shoot some whales.

Captain Nemo replies that it would be killing "for the sheer joy of destruction." He then speaks about fishermen's depopulating Baffin's Bay and it's wrong. Then Captain Nemo points out some cachalots, which he says are terrible cruel animals. Ned Land says let him kill those. Captain Nemo replies the *Nautilus* can do it because it is armed with a steel spur that can work better.

The cachalots prepare to attack the whales. The *Nautilus* submerges. Everyone except Captain Nemo watches through the panels as Captain Nemo uses the ship as a weapon. Many chachalots are killed. Ned Land calls it butchery. Captain Nemo says to each his own weapon. Two dead whales float near the *Nautilus*. Two sailors from the submarine draw the whale's milk, about two or three tons. Meanwhile Ned Land is getting more antagonistic toward Captain Nemo, a fact which worries Aronnax.

### Part 2 Chapter 12 Analysis

In this chapter Captain Nemo's words sound very modern, with an ecological sensibility. He says things like mankind is annihilating a class of useful animals and no one should hunt and kill for the sake of enjoyment. In other parts of the book he talks about nature in balance and such modern concepts.

This chapter is written with a dramatic edge to it as Captain Nemo and Ned Land have a slight confrontation over hunting. There is a much deeper underlying battle going on that Aronnax senses. Aronnax is afraid Land will erupt and kill Captain Nemo.



## Part 2 Chapter 13

### Part 2 Chapter 13 Summary

The submarine is traveling south toward the South Pole on March 13. All over this arctic sea are icebergs. Aronnax describes their colors and effulgence. Sometimes the *Nautilus* has to pass through narrow openings to get through the field of ice blocks. It is very cold and there are only a few hours of darkness at night.

On March 18 the *Nautilus* is stuck in the "Great Ice Barrier." Aronnax is convinced they are "stuck in a vice" but Captain Nemo assures him that the ship can get through all the way to the South Pole. Aronnax says they need wings to fly over it. Captain Nemo replies they will go under it and what is impossible for a ship is not difficult for a submarine.

Aronnax enjoys watching the ship move through the waters. It is very cold inside and out. At a depth of three thousand feet, there was four thousand feet of ice above the ship, with a thousand over the water line. Every time the *Nautilus* tries to climb higher, it strikes against the ice ceiling. At six in the morning on March 19, the *Nautilus* breaks through to open sea.

### Part 2 Chapter 13 Analysis

This is yet another example of Captain Nemo's daring and determination to do things no one else would attempt. Aronnax again is timid and raises objections. Most of this chapter is a description of the beauty of icebergs. It is interesting to consider that Jules Verne was a homebody who rarely traveled. Everything came out of his imagination. He would spend mornings writing and afternoons in the library, looking up materials on marine life and icebergs.



## Part 2 Chapter 14

### Part 2 Chapter 14 Summary

The *Nautilus* becomes one of the few ships of its time to approach the South Pole. Captain Nemo and Aronnax do calculations based on the sun and other measurements to make sure they have really reached the spot. It is as the American Maury described: there is a large floating ice cap of enormous size and other unique characteristics.

Captain Nemo, Aronnax, Conseil and others take the little boat to the land, which seems of volcanic origin. Aronnax typically describes penguins, albatrosses and other wildlife. The day is very foggy and dark, so Captain Nemo says they will have to return the next day.

A day passes with a severe snowstorm. On March 20 Conseil and Aronnax go out again and observe walrus, seals and other wildlife. About eleven in the morning Captain Nemo and others arrive. Aronnax expresses his worries that tomorrow is the equinox, which means there will be no sunlight to use as a guide and measurement as to whether they've reached the pole. The sun will disappear for six months. Captain Nemo says they can wait until tomorrow because he will use a chronometer to put him within 100 yards of the Pole, a distance precise enough for him.

The next day the *Nautilus* party goes ashore again. Ned Land stays behind. They pass numerous whales and other sea life and land around nine in the morning. It took them about two hours to climb through sharp rocks and lava. At the summit they look out on the ocean. Captain Nemo makes his calculations. The sun coincides with noon as marked by his chronometer. Captain Nemo announces that he takes possession of this part of the globe in his own name. He unfurls a black banner with a big "N" on it.

### Part 2 Chapter 14 Analysis

The feud between Captain Nemo and Ned Land is building. This chapter is beautifully written to build up the suspense and importance of landing on the South Pole. First of all there is some reason to believe it does not really exist. The timing of the equinox creates tension: will they reach the Pole in time? They only have a few days to do it. Finally, Captain Nemo is dramatic and emotional as he puts up his own personal flag.





## Part 2 Chapter 15

### Part 2 Chapter 15 Summary

The next day, March 22, the *Nautilus* prepares to leave. The sea is starting to freeze. Aronnax wonders how whales and other wildlife survive the winter here. About three o'clock in the morning Aronnax awakes after being thrown to the floor. Ned Land and Conseil come out and ask Aronnax what's happened. Pictures on the wall and furniture are thrown about. They see that the boat is at one hundred eighty fathoms. They search out Captain Nemo.

Captain Nemo says there has been an accident of nature. A huge block of ice toppled over on to the *Nautilus*. One berg under the hull raised it up and threw it into an ice bed. The *Nautilus* is on her side. Aronnax says why can't we empty our reservoirs to steady the ship? Captain Nemo says we are doing just that right now.

The ship rights itself and rises to the surface of the sea. But there is a huge wall of ice in front of her. The vessel is caught in a tunnel of ice filled with quiet water. Perhaps it would be easy just to travel forward through the tunnel.

The sight of the ice through the panels is beautiful. Even Ned Land admits that. Suddenly Conseil cries out in pain that his eyes are blind. "The fire from the myriad of diamonds is too dazzling to be borne," Aronnax concludes.

The *Nautilus* is stuck so Captain Nemo puts her in reverse. They move along for several hours until there is another violent shock. The iceberg that turned over closed every outlet. They are completely walled in.

### Part 2 Chapter 15 Analysis

In this chapter as so many others, Aronnax and even Conseil are taken up by the beauty of what they are seeing. They easily realize that no one else has had such an adventure, but it is coming at a price. This is a dangerous business. Ned Land stays mad and Captain Nemo stays in control.



## Part 2 Chapter 16

### Part 2 Chapter 16 Summary

Captain Nemo coolly makes the calculation that they have less than forty-eight hours to live. They will be suffocated when their air supply runs out. There is also the possibility they will be crushed to death. What they will try to do is crush the ice at its thinnest point. He will find that point by sound. The crew of the *Nautilus* dons cork jackets. Ned Land offers to help with his harpoon; Captain Nemo gives permission.

The men use picks and screws to break through at a point where the ice is ten yards thick. When a piece breaks off, it floats upwards and thus makes it thicker at the top. Aronnax joins the work, which helps keep him warm. The air in the *Nautilus* is as bad as breathing through apparatus.

After twelve hours, the crew has only gone through one-yard thickness. This is too slow: at this rate, they need five nights and four days to break through the barrier. The next morning Aronnax believes that the ice seems more solid. He gives his concerns to Captain Nemo, who has already concluded the same thing.

By March 26 Captain Nemo confides to Aronnax that they must do something desperate or they will be sealed up forever. They think together and discuss the situation. Captain Nemo comes up with the idea of using boiling water. Electric heat from pipes raises the temperature of the water drawn from the sea. Using the hot water seems to take away the danger of solidification. By March 27 only four yards of ice remain.

Aronnax feels himself dying from suffocation. He hears Conseil saying to himself, "If only I could leave more air for my master!" Everyone else is suffering too but Captain Nemo remains cool and energetic. The *Nautilus* finally floats above the trench. They fill the reservoirs and she lowers again. They hear the sound of ice cracking. Conseil and Ned Land sacrifice some of their air supply to help Aronnax, saving his life. The *Nautilus* tears along quickly and breaks the ice field by backing off and rushing forward against it. Finally there is air.

### Part 2 Chapter 16 Analysis

This is a very exciting chapter. During one of the worst crises of the book, Captain Nemo never changes and remains cool and thoughtful. He comes up with an ingenious solution to a problem. On the other hand, Aronnax is one of the weakest links. He has to be saved from death by his friends. Notice how easily Jules Verne goes from the triumph of reaching the South Pole to the life-death struggle of this chapter.



## Part 2 Chapter 17

### Part 2 Chapter 17 Summary

Conseil, Ned Land and Aronnax are up on the platform, drinking in air as if it were the greatest pleasure on earth. Aronnax thanks them for saving his life and announces the bounds between them can never be severed. Ned Land is as bitter as ever and says he must escape. The *Nautilus* passes the polar circle toward Cape Horn. By April 1 Aronnax determines they are going north by the Atlantic route.

Aronnax continues his nature studies of seaweed and animals as they pass the Falkland Isles. By April 9 they are near Cape San Roque. During the next two weeks Aronnax writes about what he observes in terms of nature and wildlife. The *Nautilus* crew casts nets to catch fish. In one of the nets is a large rayfish, which Conseil picks up with two hands. This paralyzes him but he recovers from its sting. The boat continues its travels as they fish for manatees and sea turtles near the shores of the Amazon. The *Nautilus* leaves the area for high seas.

### Part 2 Chapter 17 Analysis

This is mostly a transitional chapter designed to slow the action for a while. Aronnax has a speech that reads in a very modern way. He rants about mankind's annihilation of manatees because it means weeds poison the air and causes more yellow fever. He is fearful that when the whales and seals are eliminated, the seas will become "immense centers of infection." Here he sounds just like a modern ecologist.



## Part 2 Chapter 18

### Part 2 Chapter 18 Summary

The *Nautilus* stays clear of the American coast, much to Ned Land's despair. He, Conseil and Aronnax discuss the fact that they have been prisoners for six months. They are leery of Captain Nemo because he hardly spends any time with them anymore but prefers to be alone in his rooms. Aronnax is getting motivated to escape: he wants to publish his amazing book. Aronnax again describes more fish and even relates legends about them.

On April 20 Ned Land points out the seaweed has strange movement. Aronnax says they are near caverns that would be perfect for poulps or giant squids. Conseil joins in as they talk about giant poulps that take down ships. Conseil says they don't get bigger than four feet. Aronnax says there are skeletons in museums that are two yards long with tentacles stretching twenty-six more feet. They talk back and forth about these animals. The three rush to the window. Outside is a giant cuttlefish, at least eight yards long. They can't get over the size of it. Soon other poulps appear, seven more of them.

Captain Nemo enters the room and announces they intend to fight the poulps. We will rise to the surface and slaughter them, he says. Ned Land will harpoon. The *Nautilus* surfaces and opens its hatches. Immediately an arm of a poulp slithers into the ship. Captain Nemo uses an axe on it. A French sailor is caught in another tentacle. He yells help in French and this affects Aronnax emotionally. Captain Nemo attacks with his ax and everyone follows his lead.

The giant squid fills the air with black ink. Ned Land aims for its eyes. But he is just above the beak of the cuttlefish. Aronnax goes into action, but Captain Nemo gets there first and throws his ax into the jaws of the fish. The gruesome combat goes on for another fifteen minutes. The squid dies but they have also lost one sailor.

### Part 2 Chapter 18 Analysis

This is the most famous chapter in the book. The image of the sailors fighting the giant squid is often the image of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. Jules Verne makes the action of his book into a roller coast. He builds it up slowly and then allows the reader the thrill of the crashing down.

## Part 2 Chapter 19

### Part 2 Chapter 19 Summary

The fight with the squid was April 20. Aronnax has trouble writing about it and finding the right words to reflect its horror. They can't help but remember the sailor taken into the mouth of the squid. The *Nautilus* seems to be traveling randomly and Captain Nemo has disappeared. They are in the Gulf Stream, a river within the Atlantic. Aronnax as usual is enjoying the fish and writing in his journal about them.

Ned Land wants to escape as they come so close to the United States. But the weather does not cooperate. He rants to Aronnax that he WILL NOT keep traveling to another arctic pole. It has been seven months of torture for him. He wants Aronnax to ask Captain Nemo to let them leave.

Aronnax hears Captain Nemo in his chambers and opens his door. Captain Nemo is very annoyed at this interruption. He shows Aronnax his manuscript that contains the sum of what he knows about the sea. He intends to put it in a waterproof container. The last survivor of the *Nautilus* will throw it out to sea. Aronnax offers to take it to civilization and get it published.

Captain Nemo replies angrily that no one leaves the *Nautilus* unless carried out in a coffin. Aronnax pleads Ned Land's case and warns that the Canadian will become violent. Land is not the sort of person to spend his life in study. Captain Nemo says coldly that he does not care about Ned Land and that this is the last time Aronnax can raise this subject with him. Aronnax leaves in defeat, but Ned Land is glad they now know the truth.

The *Nautilus* stays out in a terrible storm, a virtual cyclone. Captain Nemo risks his life by standing out in lightning as Aronnax goes down below. He ties himself to the platform as if to defy the storm. The *Nautilus* has to descend more than twenty-five fathoms to escape the terrors of this storm.

### Part 2 Chapter 19 Analysis

The storm becomes a symbol for the conflict between Captain Nemo and the others. The conflict is finally out in the open and it isolates Captain Nemo all the more. The image of Captain Nemo tied to the *Nautilus* is something like Captain Ahab tied to Moby Dick. Captain Nemo has fine qualities such as courage and intelligence. But in this chapter he shows an irrational cruelty.



## Part 2 Chapter 20

### Part 2 Chapter 20 Summary

The terrible storm has thrown the *Nautilus* off course. There is no hope anymore of Ned Land's escaping near the shores of New York. By May 15 they are near New Foundland. Under the sea they pass over telegraph cables laid between America and Europe. Aronnax describes how they were placed there.

On May 28 the *Nautilus* is near Ireland. It looks as if Captain Nemo is heading toward England. Aronnax wonders if they will travel the English Channel. During the entire month of May Aronnax is wondering what Captain Nemo is doing. He seems to be looking for a certain spot but perhaps is having a problem finding it.

Aronnax's guess is proving true in that he hears the Captain say the words, "It is here." Aronnax is on the platform with Captain Nemo, who goes below. The *Nautilus* submerges and goes to the bottom of the sea. Aronnax looks out the windows of the saloon and sees a large protuberance under the sea. It is the ruin of a ship. He again questions why the *Nautilus* had to stop and visit this particular "tomb."

Captain Nemo says that the ship was called the *Marseillais*. Seventy-four years ago on this very spot the ship was fighting heroically. Instead of surrendering, the crew preferred to sink the ship. The name of the ship was changed to the *Avenger*.

### Part 2 Chapter 20 Analysis

Captain Nemo is becoming more foreboding as the book reaches its conclusion. In this chapter he spends a lot of energy looking for this shipwreck but does not indicate why it is so important to him. He is becoming less communicative with Aronnax.



# Part 2 Chapter 21

## Part 2 Chapter 21 Summary

Aronnax feels disquieted by the way Captain Nemo says the word "Avenger." The word and the anger in his voice seem to suit the basest part of his personality. Aronnax feels that Captain Nemo is filled with some hatred no one can understand.

The *Nautilus* is out at sea when Aronnax and Ned Land hear gunshots that seem to be coming from a distant ship. They cannot make out her flag or identity. Aronnax believes the ship is firing at them. He lets his imagination take over: ships must know about the *Nautilus* by now, based on the experience of the *Abraham Lincoln*. Ned Land says he will jump ship and the other one will no doubt pick him up.

Ned Land starts to wave his bandana at the ship. Captain Nemo pushes Land to the floor. He announces his intention to attack the foreign ship. He puts up his strange black flag with the "N" on it. Aronnax asks why and Captain Nemo realizes that he does not know what ship it is.

The other sailors on board seem just as vengeful as Captain Nemo. He is yelling that he does not want the ruins of this ship mixed with the noble *Avenger*. Aronnax goes down below but can't resist going back out to look at what is happening. Captain Nemo is ranting about how he is the law and that through this ship he lost his wife and children, as well as mother and father. Apparently, he had to watch his entire family die. Aronnax cannot bear to become part of the murder. He and Ned Land will jump ship rather than participate.

Captain Nemo lets the other ship approach and distance itself as the night goes on. At three in the morning Aronnax goes outside and finds Captain Nemo on the platform. The other ship was only two miles away and coming closer to the lighted-up *Nautilus*. The *Nautilus* was preparing to strike the other ship at a place where its underbelly was unprotected by metal.

Meanwhile Aronnax, Ned Land and Conseil meet. They could hear the submarine tearing apart the other ship. Aronnax says he went out of his mind. He goes out and sees Captain Nemo looking through a port panel. He can see the ship falling into the water, with men clinging to the masts and struggling under the sea. Captain Nemo watched the disaster and then went into his room. He looks at a picture of his wife and children and then he "knelt down and burst into uncontrollable sobbing."

## Part 2 Chapter 21 Analysis

This is the climax of the book. No longer can Aronnax pretend that Captain Nemo is a misunderstood genius who enjoys nature studies. Captain Nemo is revealed to be a

cold-blooded monster bent on some revenge for the tragedy of his own family. Jules Verne leaves it unclear as to why his family died or even if a ship attacked them.





## Part 2 Chapter 22

### Part 2 Chapter 22 Summary

Aronnax is completely distraught by the murders. He wonders what Captain Nemo suffered by the hands of these men to need to punish them so completely. Ned Land is so unstable that Conseil watches him constantly.

The submarine is traveling north in the Atlantic. Aronnax cannot sleep nor can he tell time: all the clocks have stopped. The ship wanders for about two or three weeks. Ned Land tells Aronnax that they are going to escape tonight or die trying, if necessary. They will meet at the boat at ten o'clock.

The three men have dinner. Aronnax collects his writings and dresses for the cold. He hears Captain Nemo wandering about and then playing the organ. Aronnax creeps out of his room and sees Captain Nemo for the last time. He is so absorbed in his music that he does not notice him. Then Captain Nemo walks and says, "Almighty God, enough! Enough!"

Aronnax rushes to the boat. Ned Land gives him a dagger to use for suicide and then works at freeing the boat. There is a lot of noise from the *Nautilus*. Everyone is yelling "maelstrom!" The waters were forming a terrible whirlpool that kills whales, ships, whatever it catches. Captain Nemo is directing the *Nautilus* into the maelstrom. The little escape boat falls off the *Nautilus* and Aronnax falls unconscious.

### Part 2 Chapter 22 Analysis

Does Captain Nemo realize the three prisoners are escaping? Did he plan all along to sink his own ship too? Is that what the words "enough!" mean? Jules Verne deliberately leaves the ending and Captain Nemo's final words ambiguous.

At this point in the novel, all the characters are out of mental equilibrium from the murders. Each reacts in his own way. Captain Nemo is suicidal. Ned Land will escape or commit suicide. Aronnax has enough but falls unconscious to escape the world.



## Part 2 Chapter 23

### Part 2 Chapter 23 Summary

Aronnax awakes in a fisherman's cottage with Conseil and Ned Land. They are in Norway and unable to return to France for a month. Aronnax insists his account is absolutely true. He has no idea what has happened to the *Nautilus* or Captain Nemo. He wonders if the captain's manuscript will ever be discovered. If Captain Nemo is still alive, Aronnax prays that his hatred has lessened. He finds the destiny of this man to be strange and sublime at the same time.

### Part 2 Chapter 23 Analysis

The rescue of the three prisoners in a maelstrom is miraculous. Aronnax has slept through it so cannot describe it. The reader may be disappointed that Jules Verne solves the plot problem of getting them out of the *Nautilus* and into safe shores in this way. In the end Aronnax boasts that only he and Captain Nemo understand what is "exceedingly deep."



# Characters

## Captain Nemo

Captain Nemo is one of the most fascinating characters in literature and the prototype of many other villains. He has been so hurt by life that he has retreated into a world of his own making and one that he can totally control. He places little worth on mankind itself and believes most people to be evil-hearted warmongers. By the end of the book the reader understands that he was devastated by the loss of his family but yet that cannot be justification for his murders and cruelty.

Captain Nemo has abandoned society and the rules of civilization. He makes his own rules in his own world of the *Nautilus*, a ship he designed and built for himself according to his own specifications. Captain Nemo rules the *Nautilus*. He determines where it travels, when it stops and who is admitted on board. He rules all the people on board. They must retire to their rooms when he tells them. When he needs to perform a secret mission, he drugs anyone who may get in his way. He determines when and where he will talk to someone else. Furthermore, no one is allowed to leave the *Nautilus* ever. Captain Nemo is willing to condemn whole shiploads of people to watery graves every time he uses the *Nautilus* as an attack weapon.

Yet Captain Nemo is more complex and human than a typical, completely evil villain. He is the genius who invented a submarine with its own defense system and continuous energy supply. He is one of the richest men in the world. He is intellectual and scientific in his pursuits. He has physical courage, demonstrated by examples like his hand-to-hand combat with a shark. He sobs when one of his sailors dies and risks his life spontaneously to save a stranger's. He is interesting, challenging and entertaining as a companion, but moody enough to change into a cold-blooded stranger at a moment's notice.

## Pierre Aronnax

Aronnax is a professor about forty years old and a true scientist and intellectual. His field of study is biology and the natural sciences. At one point in the book he says God gave him a purpose of eliminating a terrible sea monster from wrecking any more ships, but this is not true. His mission in life is to seek truth, not to kill sea monsters. His truth seeking as well as his superior intellect gets in the way of his common sense. He is so in love with intellectual pursuits and maintaining discourse and friendship with a genius like Captain Nemo that he overlooks the fact that he is Captain Nemo's lifelong prisoner. He makes no attempt to escape the *Nautilus* because he enjoys the adventure and experience of submarine life. He is content to read and research all day long in Captain Nemo's saloon. On a practical level, Aronnax can be cowardly and indecisive. He is deathly afraid of sharks and this holds him back on some expeditions.



Aronnax's intellectual approach to life has isolated him socially. He has no friends or family. His only close contact is his servant, Conseil and this relationship is not an equal one. His intellectual approach makes him insensitive to others' needs. For example, he spends little time or energy thinking about the facts that Ned Land is slowly going crazy as a prisoner or that Captain Nemo is a cold-blooded murderer. Yet he can spend hours and hours writing in his journal about coral formations, the variety of anemones and other obscure subjects.

## Ned Land

Ned Land is the most likable character in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. He is the man of action, a person most comfortable doing rather than thinking. He relishes his life and physical pleasures like the eating of meat and the feel of sea air. A strong, well-built man about forty years of age, he takes joy at being a sailor at sea and delights in his job as a harpooner. When someone suggests hunting on land, he is the first to sign up; in fact, he can hardly wait!

Ned Land judges people and places by his gut instincts. He hates Captain Nemo because he has imprisoned them on the *Nautilus*. He does not care about his genius or study of plants and fish. Yet Ned Land is the person who saves Captain Nemo during a shark attack. He will instinctively do the right thing. He uses common sense rather than intellectual analyses when he makes decisions. He is basically a happy person with few psychological problems.

Ned Land has a sense of right and wrong and a black-and-white view of the world. Whereas Aronnax enjoys Captain Nemo's company and intellectual companionship, Ned Land understands his insanity and cruelty. Once Aronnax sees Captain Nemo murder an entire shipload of people, Aronnax understands what Ned Land could see all along.

## Conseil

Conseil is a Flemish man about thirty years old who has been Aronnax's servant for the past ten years. In many ways, the portrait of Conseil is the least satisfying of all the characters because it is so simply done. Conseil is a "one-note" character. His only motivation time and again is to serve his master. He is willing to go on a dangerous journey aboard the *Abraham Lincoln* without asking any questions. He goes deep-sea diving just because his master asks him to. When he and Aronnax are lost in the waters of the Pacific, it is Conseil who implores him not to give up and who saves him. Whatever Aronnax wants him to do, Conseil does without question and without considering the risk to his own life.

Conseil is always completely calm because he does not think very much. He is passive, non-assertive and boring as a character because of his implacable nature. One of his favorite, often-repeated lines is "I follow my master wherever he goes." When Ned Land



refuses to go on an underwater expedition with Captain Nemo and Aronnax, Conseil suits up without question or thought. He follows his master wherever he goes.

Conseil functions as a sounding board for Aronnax. He asks intelligent questions, which lead to pages and pages of descriptions and explanations from his master. During several dangerous episodes, Conseil risks his life to save Aronnax. When they are both dying of suffocation, Conseil gives Aronnax his air supply. He thinks of his job as to constantly serve and save Aronnax and never complains about having to do it. If anything, he is hard on himself for not doing his job perfectly. He says things like, "If only I could do more for my master!"

## **Captain Farragut**

This man is the captain of the *Abraham Lincoln*, the American frigate commissioned to search and destroy the sea monster that has been attacking ships. He and Aronnax both believe in the monster. Farragut keeps searching after the crew wants to return and offers a two thousand dollar reward to the first person who sights the monster.

## **Nicholas Pesca of Cape Matapan**

Pesca is a diver known to Captain Nemo. He may or may not be the person who sells Captain Nemo's gold for him. Aronnax at first thinks Pesca needs to be rescued.

## **Commander La Perouse**

An eighteenth century sea captain whose two ships went down near Vanikoro, he used the wreckage to build a third ship, which also sunk.

## **Admiral Chateau-Renaut**

On October 22, 1702, this sea captain went down with his ship after an intense battle. Captain Nemo found the wreck and looted it of millions of dollars in gold and silver.

## **Sailor Buried in Coral Cemetery**

After a mysterious occurrence one sailor on the Nautilus dies of hideous head wounds. He is buried undersea in the coral cemetery.

## **A fisherman from India**

This elderly man fishes for pearls without equipment. When he is attacked by a shark, Captain Nemo saves him.



## **Sailor killed by the Poulp**

Everyone on board the *Nautilus* engages in a fierce battle with this giant monster. One sailor is eaten by it.

## **Captain Nemo's Family**

Captain Nemo lost his wife, children and parents in a mysterious sea accident or battle. He keeps their picture on his wall.



## Objects/Places

### The Nautilus

This highly technological submarine that is at least a hundred years ahead of its nineteenth century setting was designed, engineered and built by Captain Nemo. It is a reflection of not only his thinking but his very soul. He has a mystical relationship with the submarine, which has become his entire world.

### The Abraham Lincoln

This frigate is commissioned to find the mysterious sea monster that is destroying ships at sea. Aronnax, Conseil and Ned Land are aboard.

### The Island of Crespo

This is an underwater island that Captain Nemo presents to Aronnax on their first undersea expedition.

### Vanikoro

An island where Le Perouse was lost. The Nautilus passes it; Aronnax and Captain Nemo have a long conversation about the incident in history.

### The Island of Gilboa

Conseil, Ned Land and Aronnax go hunting on this tropical paradise but get attacked by natives.

### Coral Cemetery

Captain Nemo buries the dead of the *Nautilus* in this "cemetery" under the sea.

### Dugong

A very large fierce sea animal with tusks, it comes near the *Nautilus* in February. Ned Land goes to harpoon it and almost gets everyone killed.



## Arabian Tunnel

Captain Nemo has discovered a secret passageway to the Mediterranean Sea, which he calls "the Arabian Tunnel." He found it by tracking the movements of fish. It is dangerous for the *Nautilus* to use this tunnel.

Florida, Sunderland

Ned Land and Aronnax see this shipwreck from the windows. It is so recent that it contains fresh corpses.

## Vigo Bay

This bay is off the coast of Spain and the site of a very famous battle and shipwreck. Captain Nemo has looted the shipwreck and taken millions of dollars in gold and silver.

## Atlantis

Captain Nemo takes Aronnax on an undersea expedition through volcanic areas. He shows Aronnax the lost city of Atlantis, now in ruins under the sea.

## Submarine Coal Mines

Captain Nemo has his own energy supply underwater by mining coal.

## Great Ice Barrier

This is a region around the South Pole that is full of icebergs and hard to navigate.

## Nemo Land

Because Captain Nemo and his crew is the first to land at the South Pole, he puts up his personal flag and claims the land for himself.

## The Marseillais

This ship is under the sea and wrecked after a battle June 1, 1794. The ship's crew preferred sinking to surrendering. Captain Nemo visits this shipwreck.





## The Avenger

This is another name for the *Marseillais*, bestowed upon it by the British because of the ship's heroic actions.

## The Poulp

This is the gigantic squid that attacks the *Nautilus* and eats one of its crewmembers.

## Ruhmkorff lamp

A lamp carried underwater by each diver.

## Setting

The action in *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* begins in New York in the spring of 1867 and finishes over a year later in northern Norway.

The story carries its protagonists across the surface of the globe to the South Pole and back, and far down into the depths of the oceans. The Nautilus itself is the true setting of the novel; it is the imaginative device that makes the action of the novel possible. Designed by Captain Nemo, the electrically powered Nautilus is two or three hundred feet long, capable of speeds far greater than surface ships of the day, and able to dive to great depths. It is large enough to contain a museum of oceanic research, a library, and even an organ, played by Nemo. The Nautilus's crewmen are able to work underwater outside the ship, using devices that resemble aqualungs to harvest the fruits of the sea.

Equipped with huge windows sometimes protected by shields, the Nautilus allows the characters to explore the unknown depths of the ocean from a dry and comfortable platform. But because Nemo has vowed never to return to the land, the Nautilus increasingly comes to resemble a prison for Aronnax, Conseil, and Ned Land, and a tomb for Nemo himself.



# Social Sensitivity

## Social Concerns

Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* raises some very complex social issues and moral questions. In spite of them, the story starts off at a deceptively slow and simple pace. When a mysterious object—floating cliff or sea monster—does serious damage to several ships, an investigation is started by the United States government, which invites Professor Aronnax, a foremost authority of marine life, to join an expedition. The US. ship *Abraham Lincoln* sets out to discover the nature of this threat to world-wide shipping. In the Indian Ocean, "the monster" rams the *Lincoln*, and Aronnax, his servant Conseil, and the Canadian harpooner Ned Land are thrown overboard. They are saved from drowning by the strange object they have been pursuing which turns out to be a submarine, and become prisoner-guests of its captain Nemo. The mystery that surrounds Nemo is a strong suspense, and Verne never reveals the entire story of the *Nautilus* and its master, but merely drops tantalizing hints. He makes it clear, however, that Nemo has chosen to turn his back on society, and Aronnax later discovers that Nemo is also carrying out revenge for an unexplained crime by attacking the ships of certain nations.

Both his solitary lifestyle and the passions that drive him are secret. Nemo has no past, he is a loner, a man driven, condemned by his own emotions. Supporting freedom fighters in nations that have been subjugated and enslaved, he plays the role of a romantic Robin Hood of the sea, as well that of a sort of Flying Dutchman who is self-condemned to keep on circling the globe.

The role of the renegade and social outcast is the major theme of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Can a man fully withdraw from human society and still be human? Captain Nemo has broken with all organized society, and Aronnax cannot even guess his nationality; in fact, the mystery of his background is not solved in this book, and is reserved for *The Mysterious Island*, Part III. Here, it is revealed that Nemo was an Indian prince, involved in the Indian Mutiny, who lost his family as well as his country. This explains his hatred of the British, yet the reasons for his misanthropy really need no explanation. He is the quintessential romantic hero, a Byronic lover of freedom, yet paradoxically a man without a country. As such, his struggles and support of freedom become universal, his hatreds bigger than life. Paradoxically, his *Nautilus* becomes an ark for all that is valuable and that he values about humanity, from art to music to literature. As a man belonging to no specific country, he can belong to all humanity. He is the essence of the romantic hero, combining loneliness and revenge with a passion for liberty and freedom.

Even though Captain Nemo plays the role of the romantic outcast who has turned his back on society, it would be wrong to see him as an embodiment of modern man's isolation due to technology. Nemo may rhapsodize about the beauty of the ocean, but he is also the proud inventor of his submarine. To Jules Verne, this machine has not yet



become an enemy to culture and environment. He was fascinated with the possibilities of technology, and his inventions are faithful servants of their human master. In none of his many novels does he ever portray technology as the reason for disaster. Even the horrible weapons of Herr Schultz in *The Begum's Fortune* (1879; see separate entry) serve justice, and destroy their evil scientist/inventor. To Verne's age, technology was a positive force that would lead to greater prosperity and advancement for mankind. With this belief firmly established, Victorians could ignore the pollution their coal-fired technology created, just as they could ignore some of the exploitation of the people working in inhumane conditions in factories and mines that supported the Industrial Revolution. This is why the true hero of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* is not Captain Nemo, attractive as he may be to the modern reader; to Verne's contemporaries, the hero is the Nautilus itself.

Verne's readers were greatly fascinated with the design of Captain Nemo's vessel, a futuristic ship of amazing possibilities.

Even though the first submarine had been built as early as 1624, and the name Nautilus had been that of a very primitive submarine offered to Napoleon by the inventor Fulton, Nemo's invention is neither primitive nor old-fashioned, but on the cutting edge of contemporary science. Of course, the modern reader no longer marvels at a ship powered by electricity, but to Verne's time this was a new and daring concept. The novel implies that the future holds fascinating scientific marvels.

## Social Sensitivity

*Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* in many ways anticipated the submarine warfare that was developed in World War I and refined during World War II. The exploits of the Nautilus encourage the reader to examine how technological advances always seem to be two-edged; technology can be used to create and to destroy. Of more immediate social significance, perhaps, are the ideas Verne presents about ecology, the balance and interdependence of all things within the natural order. Verne expresses confidence that a thorough scientific understanding of nature will allow humankind to live in harmony with the environment and harvest its abundance without depleting the earth's resources. These ideas are currently debated in issues that range from industrial pollution to destruction of the Amazonian rain forests.



# Techniques

Verne wrote *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* while on board his yacht *St. Michel* as close to the underwater world of the *Nautilus* as possible. This was the book that he always considered with special pride, because it reflected his feelings for the sea, for adventure, and for the possibilities of science, combining all the elements he would use again and again in different novels.

There is, first of all, the journey, a traditional literary device. Verne delighted in creating voyages to remote or dangerous places—a trip down the Jangada river, a journey to Antarctica, a journey to the moon. He is mostly known as a writer of science fiction, but the adventure element is equally prominent in his novels, and in the nineteenth century, most travel still meant adventure. Unlike other writers who use the journey as a metaphor for life, Verne's travels are just that: exciting trips to little known destinations with the sole purpose to discover new, previously unseen wonders. Such journeys are accomplished by means of the most recent technological advances. The destination is rarely a goal, and the journey serves as a show case for modern transportation, exotic sights, and scientific discoveries.

The futuristic fantasy, a trademark of Verne, is also a very strong aspect of this story about the *Nautilus*, the wonderful submarine that utilizes every modern technical invention, and a few that were only dreamed of.

Verne was well aware that what made this book one of the most outstanding of his many novels was the character of Captain Nemo. In many of his novels, characterization is flat, with the action dominating the narratives, but Nemo is as complex as he is mysterious, and to the very end, Aronnax, the observer, cannot figure him out or know what to make of him, being attracted and repulsed at the same time. Verne himself wrote to his publisher: "The ending—Aronnax and his companions drawing closer and closer to the Maelstrom without realizing it, then being sucked down into the whirlpool with their boat will be superb. Yes, superb! There is a shroud of Mystery forever over the *Nautilus* and its master!

Why, I grow warm as I write ..." Only in one other of Verne's novels is there a character as dominant, although in a different way, and that is Phileas Fogg, the hero of *Around the World in Eighty Days* (1872; see separate entry).

Verne has been accused of being unable to create three dimensional characters. Many of his heroes are indeed stereotypical, presenting only one aspect of their personality. Most are task oriented with a one-track mind. Michael Strogoff, the brave and loyal Siberian in *Michael Strogoff*, is unflinching stoic and heroic, and the charming young Alsatian in *The Begum's Fortune* stands alone in his determination to discover the secrets of Stahlstadt. His sudden interest in and romance with the sister of his friend Otto at the end of the novel is completely unexpected and unmotivated. Thus, one reason why Captain Nemo is such a memorable character is that Verne shows him from



several angles, both as the great scientist and angry misanthrope. By palling his hero's life with mystery, Verne avoids the need to justify these contradictory roles, and adds a depth that is actually more a semblance than a reality.

What possibilities are hidden in his mysterious past?

## Literary Qualities

Verne often works scientific description into the plot, as when Nemo and Aronnax use their knowledge of the tides and the moon to free the Nautilus after it has run aground. But frequently the novel's suspense is marred by a clutter of scientific details, such as a long listing of fishes or plants according to scientific categories of class, order, genus, and species. Sometimes Aronnax seems to be merely reciting his knowledge as he gazes out the Nautilus's windows.

Still, Verne's enthusiastic depiction of science and technology is a major strength of the book. Verne carefully researched existing submarine technology, studying Robert Fulton's early designs and the plans for Confederate submarines, such as the Hunley, used during the Civil War. To make his descriptions more convincing, Verne interviewed engineers who had helped lay the Atlantic cable about the strange life forms they encountered under the sea.

This verisimilitude is what makes Verne's novel a work of science fiction, rather than fantasy. Verne's contribution to the genre is such that modern science fiction writers continue to emulate many of his techniques.



# Themes

## Man's Quest for Adventure and Exploration

The basic theme of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* is mankind's universal impulse to understand and explore every environment. Aronnax, like Adam and Eve in the Bible, takes on the task of identifying and classifying every animal on the planet. Captain Nemo takes his strange submarine into places no man has ever been before: a coral cemetery, a grotto filled with pearls, a sea made of milk and so forth. He travels tens of thousands of miles under and on the surface of the sea because he has a quest for adventure and knowledge. This quest for knowledge and understanding and the need to explore every inch of the planet seems to be a function inherent to the human brain. The author Jules Verne totally understands and delights in this universal and basic impulse to acquire new knowledge.

Science is a corollary of man's need for knowledge and exploration. Professor Aronnax is a true scientist. He so delights in his work that he does not care if he is imprisoned on a submarine. He can forget his imprisonment and totally lose himself in the adventure of underwater exploration or the delights of watching underwater marine life through the panels of the saloon.

There is a certain irony in the character of Captain Nemo. The man who hates mankind is benefiting it through his exploration and scientific achievements. Another true scientist and creative engineer, Captain Nemo has figured out how to create an endless supply of energy by converting seaweed into electricity. He has built an extraordinary submarine and spends his life in exploration like the purist truth seeker. In this way he is the embodiment of the best part of man's highest instincts as well as his basest.

## The Man of Action vs. the Man of Intellect

Ned Land is a workingman with little education. His knowledge of the sea comes from his experience of it as a harpooner. Yet his ability to use his common sense makes him more of a survivor than the more intellectual Aronnax. He is a person who enjoys physical life and pleasures and is not afraid to take risks. The brilliant Aronnax is a much more passive character.

Take the example of the two characters' behavior on the *Abraham Lincoln*. Unlike Aronnax, Land never once believes that the mythical sea creature exists. He knows too much about whales. He has the sense to stay aboard the *Abraham Lincoln* rather than try to harpoon it from a tiny boat. It would have been Captain Farragut's judgment, however, to send Land out to kill the monster on a small boat.

Once Ned Land harpoons the *Nautilus*, he knows that it is not an animal but a man-made object of sheet metal. He trusts his own hearing when his harpoon hits the metal





surface. On the other hand, Aronnax is so convinced that a monster is "eating" the *Abraham Lincoln* that he gives up all hope of being rescued.

Land continually shows more courage and common sense than Aronnax. It is Land who shows Aronnax how to survive in the cold night sea by standing on the *Nautilus*. It is Land who kills a shark after Aronnax freezes in horror at the sight of it.

Ned Land understands immediately that Captain Nemo is a monster who is willing to keep them prisoners for life. He is not interested in him as a person or intellectual. Land wants to escape through a daring plan; Aronnax is passive about escaping.

## Science Fiction As Futurism

One of the reasons Jules Verne has been widely read and admired is that his writing is so far ahead of its time. Many of the scientific advances he first imagines in books like *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* have later become realities. Verne lived by the motto "What one man can imagine, another can create." He felt it was part of his purpose in life to envision the future.

*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* seems modern today because it expresses a concern for environmentalism and ecology, movements that did not become popular until the 1960s. For example, Captain Nemo has created an endless supply of energy by converting seaweed to electricity. He feeds his crew from marine products only. Today's scientists are still concerned about renewable energy and using the oceans to feed mankind.

Other inventions that Jules Verne anticipates in this book are underwater scuba diving equipment, large submarines that are easily navigated and can travel for long lengths of time and over long distances and defense systems using electrical voltage. He also anticipates a widespread exploration and detailed mapping of the oceans, which has only recently been undertaken.

Many parts of the book have an ecological slant. Captain Nemo is a misanthrope who believes mankind is ruining the planet. He rages how people are killing certain fishes and ruining the balance of nature in those parts of the oceans.

This book like other of Verne's masterpieces helped to guide scientists' thinking and imaginations to create advancements that benefit everyone. That is one of the reasons it is a classic.

There is one theme that dominates this novel—the power and the glory of the ocean. To the crew of the *Nautilus*, it is their entire world, as Nemo explains to Aronnax: The sea is everything. It covers seven-tenths of the globe. Its breath is pure and healthy. It is an immense wasteland where man is never alone, for he feels life stirring on all sides.

The sea is nothing but a medium of a supernatural, phenomenal life. It is nothing more than motion and love; it is a living infinity, as one of your poets has said ... You could say



that our planet owes its beginning to the sea, and who knows if it won't terminate with it? Here, there is supreme peace. The sea does not belong to tyrants. Ah sir. Live, live inside the sea. Only here does independence exist! Here I recognize no master! Here I am free.

The ocean as an alien world far removed from life on the surface is an idea which Verne developed. In a letter to his father and brother he wrote: "This unknown man must have no connection with the human race from which he separated himself. He is not on the Earth; he does without it. The ocean is enough for him."

Even Melville's Captain Ahab in *Moby Dick* is sometimes a creature of the land, but Nemo has cut all ties to his former domain.

Yet for all its beauty and strangeness, the realm of the ocean is also a cruel world. Like Captain Nemo, it has many faces. The various experiences that Aronnax records in his journal during his underwater journey range from a pleasant hunting excursion, a lighthearted picnic on the ocean floor to a hair raising trip through the coral reefs of the Torres Strait, the archeological discovery leading to an answer about the fate of La Perouse's expedition of 1785, and a terrifying encounter with a group of sharks.

The ocean even proves to be the power that destroyed an entire civilization. During an undersea excursion, Professor Aronnax sees the ruins of temples, buildings, walls and columns. His surprise is answered by Nemo who writes on a stone: "Atlantis," the name of the legendary lost continent. The ocean is shown as destroyer as well as nurturer. It becomes the eternal resting place for many of its victims, and in a sad ceremony a crew member of the *Nautilus* is buried in the infinity of the ocean floor.

The violence of the ocean finds its echo in the darker deeds of Captain Nemo which so shocked Verne's editor that he asked the writer to give his hero a specific political motif for hatred. But the author refused, keeping the mystery and universality of his hero, and making him therefore a symbol of revolt against tyranny from any source. Like the sea, Captain Nemo is generous in his gifts, and like the sea, he can be incredibly cruel.

The theme of the ocean as a natural home of the social rebel dominates *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Even the interior of the *Nautilus* reflects this idea.

The paintings in the ship's gallery include portraits of Kosciusko of Poland, Botzaris of Greece, Daniel O'Connell of Ireland, Manin of Italy, and of George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, and John Brown, all men who stood up for the liberty of their oppressed and enslaved countries. Like them, Nemo, too, is helping the nations of the world fight for freedom by giving them gold extracted from the ocean floor.



# Style

## Points of View

The book is written as a first-person narrative by Professor Pierre Aronnax. It often takes the form of a journal in which Aronnax records the minutiae of each day aboard the *Nautilus*. Since Aronnax is a scientist, many parts of the book are about science. There are long passages explaining exactly where the *Nautilus* is traveling in terms of longitude and latitude. About a third of the book is nothing but descriptions of marine life in the various oceans and seas through which the submarine travels.

Aronnax is not interested in people or personalities, but science and the attainment of knowledge. He can easily ignore the plights of his fellow travelers - for example, he is insensitive to Ned Land's complete outrage at being a prisoner. He is more interested in a new oyster than Captain Nemo's need for revenge. This can make the book rather dry reading.

## Setting

*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* has a unique setting. It takes place aboard the *Nautilus* on its long submarine journey around the world. The motto of the *Nautilus* is one of the themes of the book: *Mobilis in Mobili*. This is Latin for "moving within a moving element." The characters move within the *Nautilus* as it travels under water.

By setting the book completely on the *Nautilus*, the world of *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* becomes very small and contained. It is an enjoyable setting for Captain Nemo and Aronnax who love to look out windows and then later read about, research and classify what they see. However, it is a boring setting for men of action like Ned Land who literally suffer "cabin fever."

The sea itself is a major element of the setting. There are very few books written completely at sea with a focus on descriptions of changes in the oceans and marine life. This book gives a lot of information on the differences between different oceans and seas around the world. Just as there are tigers in India but not California, there are coral formations in one ocean but not another. This is the kind of detail in the setting that Jules Verne relishes.

## Language and Meaning

Jules Verne writes in the vernacular of a nineteenth century gentleman. His language can often seem stilted to the modern reader. A character can speak like this: "It fears not the terrible tempests of the Red Sea, nor its currents nor its sand reefs."



There are three basic modes of writing in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. The first and most often used is a poetic description of the sea and marine life. There are also long emotional renderings of each different character's feelings about the sea. Verne describes marine life in detail and as it differs in each new marine environment. This is a typical sentence from one of these long descriptive passages — "The zoophytes flourished beneath the level of the sea and wove themselves into a thousand picturesquely impossible patterns, some away below the surface. But above the level of the waters! They unfolded their spectacular beauty in a manner capricious..."

Verne can also write in a completely scientific way. He uses a lot of exact numbers to place where the *Nautilus* has traveled. He describes the boat itself in terms of tonnage and technical terms about its engine, propulsion, etc. These passages (and there are many of them) read like this: "(The island) was located between 10 degrees and 14 degrees 30 north latitude and 69 degrees and 50 degrees 72 east longitude. We had covered 16,220 miles (7,500 French leagues)" The third basic mode of language is straight narrative writing. Some of the better examples are the wreck of the *Abraham Lincoln* and Captain Nemo's killing of the shark on Ceylon Island.

## Structure

*20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* is a story told in chronological order by a first-person narrator. It is made up of forty-seven brief chapters, which are divided into Parts 1 and 2. The main story is conflict between Captain Nemo and Ned Land, Conseil and Aronnax over their imprisonment on board the *Nautilus*. This story often does not provide much conflict because Aronnax is usually content to be on board and enjoying the new sights and conversations with Captain Nemo. There is no constant struggle between them until the end of the book.

Because there is really not much of a dramatic main story, the book is more a series of episodes such as the submarine hunt, the coral cemetery, the iceberg, the South Pole, their imprisonment in the ice, Atlantis and so forth. Each episode is a little story in itself with a beginning, middle and ending.



## Quotes

For some time prior to the opening of our story ships at sea had been met by an enormous object, a long thing shaped like a spindle and infinitely larger and more rapid in its movements than a whale. At times it was phosphorescent. Part 1 Chapter 1, pg 1

Our business is with the monster - the famous narwhal. We are going to rid the seas of it. The author of a thick work on *Mysteries of the Unsounded Depths Undersea* cannot dodge his duty. Part 1 Chapter 3, pg 26

The monster emerged several fathoms from the water and then gave forth that intense but inexplicable light that had already been reported by various sea captains. Part 1 Chapter 6, pg 39

Was it unintentionally that the *Abraham Lincoln* pursued me across the seas? That you took passage in the frigate? That your cannonballs rebounded from the plating of my vessel? That Mr. Land struck me with his harpoon? Part 1 Chapter 10, pg 65

Not only had (Captain Nemo) put himself beyond the pale of human laws, he had made himself independent of them. In the strictest sense of the word, he was free, because he was outside the reach of the moral code. Part 1 Chapter 10, pg 65

The sea is everything. Its breath is pure and life giving. It is an immense desert place where man is never lonely, for he senses the weaving of Creation on every hand. It is the physical embodiment of a supernatural existence (Captain Nemo speaking). Part 1 Chapter 10, pg 70

This is the most perfect of vessels! ... When it dives below the water, it reaches absolute tranquility. .. You understand the trust I repose in my *Nautilus*; for I am at once captain, builder and engineer. Part 1 Chapter 14, pg 86

"You are rich, Captain Nemo?"

"Immensely rich, sir; and I could, without missing it, pay the national debt of France."  
Part 1 Chapter 14, pg 87

Various kinds of Isis, clusters of pure tuft coral, prickly fungi and anemones formed a brilliant garden of flowers. This was enameled with Porpita decked with their collarettes of blue tentacles. Sea stars studded the sandy bottom. Part 1 Chapter 16, pg 104

My blood froze in my veins as I realized that we were narrowly threatened by two formidable man-eating sharks. Part 1 Chapter 17, pg 113

What a scene! We were struck dumb. Our hearts beat the faster at the sight of this shipwreck, a scene drawn straight from life ... I saw with a shudder, huge sharks attracted by the human flesh. Part 1 Chapter 19, pg 120



It was only two months that we had been received on board a submersible ... and yet, to all intents and purposes, we had been prisoners and none had understood this fact better than we. Therefore the time had often seemed an eternity. Part 1 Chapter 21, pg 136

Why are you so astonished, M. Aronnax, at meeting savages when you set foot on a strange land? Where in all the earth are there not savages? And do you for a moment suppose them worse than other men, those fellows that you call savages? Part 1 Chapter 22, pg 147

You must at once be confined to your cabin, together with your companions; until I see fit to release you ... I demand instant obedience. Part 1 Chapter 23, pg 163

This glade was a graveyard, this hole a tomb. The oblong object was the body of the man who had passed away during the night. The captain and his men had come to bury their dead companion in this unworldly cemetery at the bottom of the inaccessible ocean. Part 1 Chapter 24, pg 168

Conseil believed Captain Nemo was a misunderstood genius who had grown tired of the earth's insincerity and greed and who had therefore taken refuge in this inaccessible medium because there he was free to follow his own instincts. Part 2 Chapter 1, pg 173

I saw Captain Nemo straighten himself from a crouching position and, dagger in hand, walk directly toward the submarine terror, ready for a face-to-face fight with it. .. All the rest of my life I shall see the attitude of our commander at this juncture. He held himself well together, waiting with admirable courage for the onslaught of the shark. Part 2 Chapter 3, pg 193

The Indian is a member of an oppressed race. I still am and ever shall be one with all such people. Part 2 Chapter 3, pg 195

My friend, you are fed up with this journey undersea. But for my part, I shall be sorry to see the end of a voyage, which it is given to so few men to take. Part 2 Chapter 4, pg 197

The captain took the helm. A great gallery, black and deep, opened before us. Our craft plunged boldly into it. .. Into the jaws of death, into the mouth of hell, we seemed to ride with the waters of the Red Sea. Part 2 Chapter 5, pg 213

I wished in no way to shackle the freedom of my companions, but I certainly had no inclination to abandon our commander. Thanks to him and his apparatus, I was coming each day nearer to the completion of my submarine studies. Part 2 Chapter 6, pg 215

"The iceberg in turning over has closed every outlet."

"We are walled in on every side then?"

"I regret to report that we are, sir." Part 2 Chapter 15, pg 298



It was an immense cuttlefish, at least eight yards long. ... Its eight arms were twice as long as its body and twisted like the snakes in the Furies' hair. Part 2 Chapter 16, pg 321

"Here, Professor, is a manuscript ... that contains the sum of my knowledge of the sea. If it please God, it shall not perish with me. This book ... will be found locked in an insubmersible case. The last survivor of all of us on board the *Nautilus* will throw this case into the sea..." Part 2 Chapter 18, pg 330

It was no common hatred of his kind, which had shut Captain Nemo and his comrades within the submarine. It was a wrath, either monstrous or sublime, which age could not stale nor custom wither. Part 2 Chapter 21, pg 340

"Are you going to attack this ship?"

"Certainly. And sink it."

"You must not do that, sir."

"And who are you to give commands, pray?" Part 2 Chapter 22, pg 343

I turned to Captain Nemo, that terrible avenger, a perfect archangel of hatred. He was still studying the details of the catastrophe. Part 2 Chapter 22, pg 348

"That which is far off and exceeding deep, who can find it out" Two men alone of all now living have the right to give an answer: CAPTAIN NEMO AND MYSELF. Part 2 Chapter 23, pg 356

# Adaptations

Film versions of Jules Verne are popular, especially in the modern cinema with its endless possibilities of special effects.

In 1954, Walt Disney created a lively and entertaining version of *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*. James Mason is impressive as the somber Captain Nemo, while Kirk Douglas plays a swashbuckling Ned Land, and Peter Lorre is both pedantic and comical as Conseil. The real hero of the motion picture is the Nautilus, a menacingly sharklike vessel with barbs for ramming unfortunate ships, and an opulent Victorian-style interior.

The earliest motion picture version of the novel is probably *20000 lieues sous les mers*, a 1907 French production. It was directed by Georges Méliès. Its emphasis is on showing the wonders of the ocean rather than on the story line. The next significant adaptation of the novel was the 1916 American production *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*. An early feature film, it runs 105 minutes. It was made by Universal Pictures and was produced, directed, and written by Stuart Paton.

Captain Nemo is played by Allen Holubar; Professor Aronnax by Dan Hamlon; Ned Land by Curtis Benton; Miss Aronnax by Edna Pendleton; Princess Daaker by Jane Gail; Cyrus Harding by Howard Crampton; Lieutenant Bond by Matt Moore; Herbert Brown by Martin Murphy; Pencroft by Wallis Clark; and Neb by Leviticus Jones. The most important work was done by Frank Ormston, the art director, and George Williamson and J. Ernest Williamson who did the underwater photography. Although the story is silly, combining elements from more than one novel, and the acting unintentionally funny, the special effects such as a mechanical octopus and underwater photography of real sea life made the motion picture a thrilling experience in 1916. Much money was sunk into the picture's special effects, especially the submarine, and the underwater scenes and the resulting expenses were so great that the picture failed to earn a profit.

The 1916 version is suitable for viewing by children, and an emphasis on child audiences seems to be fundamental to not only the 1954 version but to more recent productions.

Rankin/Bass, an industrious producer of animated motion pictures, created a 60-minute-long *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* in 1973. As for other Rankin/Bass productions, the directors were Arthur Rankin, Jr. and Jules Bass. Reactions to this production vary widely, with some grownups finding it tedious and the music cloying. Others enjoy the color-rich artwork. An animated video version of the novel was released by Video Treasures in 1990. Only 47 minutes in length, it is primarily an adventurous romp intended for young viewers.





## Key Questions

Captain Nemo, antisocial reprobate and oceangoing Robin Hood, raises the themes of revenge and redemption.

Verne's publisher, Hetzel, strongly objected to some of the savage aspects of Nemo, especially his sinking of the British ship at the end of the second volume.

Is the contradictory Nemo believable? Was Verne right in defending his creation against suggestions of playing down or rationalizing his character? As Robert Evans points out in his book *Jules Verne Rediscovered* (1988), Captain Nemo is the archetype of the Romantic hero of the eighteenth and nineteenth century. A discussion of this concept may lead to other writers who have created similar protagonists. What are the traits of the Romantic hero, and his role in fiction?

1. The opening chapters of Verne's novel do not introduce Captain Nemo's submarine. Instead, the author discusses at length several theories about the mysterious object or objects that are damaging ships in various oceans. What is the purpose of spending so much time on these misleading leads? What is the effect on one when the truth is finally revealed?
2. Ned Land and Conseil are opposites, but they are both interested in the ocean. Compare the two and their different attitudes. Is Verne ridiculing contemporary scientists? What is the attitude of Professor Aronnax? Why is he fascinated with the subject?
3. Why does Aronnax so willingly agree with Captain Nemo to remain on his ship? What does he admire about the Captain? Why does he not agree with Ned Land's proposals to escape? Why does Nemo not require his "guests" to give their word of honor not to escape?
4. Aronnax admits that he does not understand Nemo. Does Nemo understand Aronnax? Are they kindred spirits?
5. Jules Verne spends much time discussing the scientific principles of the Nautilus. He is so convincing that few readers question his explanations. From what we know today, are they scientifically possible? For instance can electricity really be produced from salt water?
6. What is Captain Nemo's attitude towards the natives of Papua, towards slavery, towards tyranny? Are his ideas typical for Verne's age, for the age of the Industrial Revolution?
7. Nemo's destruction of the British vessel is one of the most violent scenes in the book. After having shown his hero as noble, gracious and generous, why does Verne present



him here as savage and full of hatred? Is this side of his personality compatible with his other aspects? Is it believable? Is it necessary?

8. At the conclusion of the book, Professor Aronnax writes in his journal: "Will the public believe me?" Why does he ask?

9. The ending leaves the fate of the Nautilus unanswered. Why?



## Topics for Discussion

Many critics describe Captain Nemo as one of the greatest villains in literature. Do you see him as only a villain? Why or why not? Use incidents from the book to back up your opinion.

Choose and analyze three or four episodes from *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* in which Aronnax behaves as a man of intellect and Ned Land behaves as a man of action.

Some writers have seen Captain Nemo as a man who defies God. Did you take any theological implications out of this book? Explain your answer.

What is the meaning of Captain Nemo's final words, "Almighty God, enough! Enough!"?

Discuss the environmental concerns expressed in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

Have you read any other science fiction that had valid predictions for man's future? Discuss the inventions first appearing in *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and other science fiction that later became realities.

What was the most interesting episode in the book for you? Explain your answer.

Classic books like *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* are often copied by other writers. Can you see prototypes of James Bond villains in Captain Nemo? Did the *Nautilus* seem a little like Star Trek's *Enterprise* to you? Discuss this book as a prototype for these creations and others you can think of.

1. What is the relationship of Ned Land to Captain Nemo? What do they admire and dislike about each other?

2. Why has Captain Nemo renounced living on land? Is he a tragic figure?

3. What makes Professor Aronnax want to stay on the submarine? What makes him decide to flee?

4. What would *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* be like without Conseil? Is he necessary to the action of the novel?

5. The sea provides Captain Nemo with a living, but does it also provide him with a reason to live?

6. Nemo uses the miraculous technology of the *Nautilus* to destroy. Might he use the submarine to benefit humankind?



## Ideas for Reports and Papers

1. Professor Aronnax is the narrator of *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. What thematic advantages do you see in his being the narrator?
2. Captain Nemo is an enigmatic character. Write a character analysis of him, explaining his motivations for specific actions in the book.
3. The works of Edgar Allan Poe influenced Verne's literary career. Read Poe's "Descent into the Maelstrom" (1841). What similarities do you find to *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*? How do the authors' writing styles and techniques compare?
4. How are modern submarines superior or inferior to Captain Nemo's Nautilus? Research the development of the first submarines and compare these early efforts with Verne's concept of the Nautilus.
5. Much science fiction deals with trips into the unknown and encounters with strange or alien creatures. What is the fascination with such journeys? What is the fascination with strange life forms?



## Literary Precedents

Melville's *Moby Dick* (1851) can be compared to Verne's novel for a number of reasons. Like Captain Nemo, Captain Ahab is sailing the ocean possessed by the idea of revenge. Ahab, like Nemo, is deeply affected by the ocean, which encompasses his life. Yet the Nautilus, as vehicle of destruction, can hardly be compared to the great white whale, Moby Dick. While the whale is the nemesis of Ahab, the Nautilus is merely a creation of Nemo; it may resemble a ferocious sea creature, but it has no life or will of its own.

Another novel that deals with the cruelty as well as the benevolence of the sea is Ernest Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea* (1952; see separate entry). Like the protagonists of most sea stories, the old man does not interact much with human society. Like the heroes of other sea stories, he tends to be a loner, forced, by his own choice, to pit himself against the ocean in a solitary struggle that he will lose in the end.

## Further Study

Commire, Anne, ed. *Something About the Author*. Vol. 21. Detroit: Gale Research, 1980. Article on Verne provides the basic facts of his life along with a listing of editions and adaptations of his work.

Scholes, Robert, and Eric S. Rabkin.

*Science Fiction: History, Science, Vision*. London: Oxford University Press, 1977. Verne is depicted as a writer to be admired for his imagination rather than his narrative skills.

Suvin, Darko. *Metamorphoses of Science Fiction*. New Haven: Yale University Press, 1979. A Marxist perspective that examines Verne's early socialist ideas.

Verne, Jean Jules. *Jules Verne: A Biography*. Translated by Roger Greaves.

New York: Taplinger, 1976. Particularly interesting are Verne's letters to his editor, Hetzel, which describe the political considerations that shaped the character of Nemo.

## Related Titles

The title character in *The Clipper in the Clouds* (1886) travels above the ground in a flying machine named the "Albatross," and targets hot air balloonists of the Weldon Institute. Like Nemo, he is a mysterious character without a past, and we only learn his identity in a sequel, *The Master of the World* (1904). Ker Karraje, a Malayan pirate in the novel *For the Flag* (1896), terrorizes the Pacific Ocean in a submarine. And Captain Nemo's disillusionment with human society is found in the enigmatic Kawdjer of *The Survivors of the Jonathan* (1909).



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