

I'm not a bot



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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Article written by Emma Baldwin B.A. in English, B.F.A. in Fine Art, and B.A. in Art Histories from East Carolina University. This is a novel that, in my opinion, is filled with mystery, adventure, and science writing in equal parts. While, there's much to be enjoyed; there is a seemingly equal portion of the novel that may test readers' abilities to remain focused on the content and interested in such complicated information as the amount of water the submarine displaces, how it manufactures air, and how much pressure it can withstand. For this reader, Captain Nemo's character was the best part of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. Although his name is often cited as one of the most famous of Jules Verne's literary creations, without reading about his adventures personally, one cannot appreciate his depth of character and understand his struggle to both find both peace and achieve revenge. As the novel begins, Captain Nemo is introduced as a charming, intelligent, and dangerous captor who is holding the three main characters against their will. For the narrator especially, Captain Nemo and his Nautilus, along with his vast collection of scientific achievements, are overwhelming. Rather than fight against his capture, Professor Aronnax is enthralled by everything he sees. He sets Ned Land's worries to the side and explores the ship. After having finished the novel, it's clear that Nemo hoped the Professor would do just this. He knew that if he could divide the three captives that he'd have a better chance of keeping them under his control and ensuring that he could continue on his quest for revenge. Despite learning details about the Captain throughout the book, his character remains a mystery. From his introduction, to the revelation of his psychosis and his desire for revenge, I was captivated. One can't help but wonder what his origin story is and how he came to have the resources necessary to build the Nautilus. Plus, how could he entice his crew into joining him in a life under the sea? (Their origin story is another mystery that Verne only alludes to.) Here is an example of the skillful language Verne employed to ensure readers are drawn into his underwater mystery. Nemo says: I am not what you call a civilized man! I have done with society entirely, for reasons which I alone have the right of appreciating. I do not, therefore, obey its laws, and I desire you never to allude to them before me again! Here, readers are provided with a hint of the rage behind Nemo's facade of intellectual pursuit. There is something darker going on, and it was this mystery, more than anything that inspired me to continue reading the novel. This novel is often cited as one of adventure and exploration. Both of these things, and more, are true about Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. The novel includes wonderful passages like: The sea is everything. It covers seven tenths of the terrestrial globe. Its breath is pure and healthy. It is an immense desert, where man is never lonely, for he feels life stirring on all sides. The sea is only the embodiment of a supernatural and wonderful existence. It is nothing but love and emotion; it is the Living Infinite. Quotes like the above are the reason that most readers become interested in Jules Verne's writing. And for good reason, there are many sections of this book that paint a beautiful picture of the sea and romanticize ideas of exploration and discovery. Undoubtedly, many elements of Jules Verne's novel are enthralling and original. But, his long passages of scientific descriptions of the Nautilus submarine were the stand-out low point. Although some details were necessary, and others more than welcome, several chapters contained long passages of scientific descriptions of the submarine. Nemo's collections, the way in which the sub was powered by electricity, and less than memorable descriptions of the ocean the crew was exploring. For example, here is a quote from Chapter XI in which Nemo is talking about the submarine's dimensions: Here, M. Aronnax, are the several dimensions of the boat you are in. It is an elongated cylinder with conical ends. It is very like a cigar in shape, a shape already adopted in London in several constructions of the same sort [...]. These two dimensions enable you to obtain by a simple calculation the surface and cubic contents of the Nautilus. Its area measures 6 032 feet, and its contents about 1,500 cubic yards; that is to say, when completely immersed it displaces 50,000 feet of water, or weighs 1,500 tons. This passage is a hint of what some of the more scientific and descriptive sections in the novel are like. For most readers, it is likely that long sections of this kind of language are going to test one's ability to remain focused and interested in what's being described. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that while readers are going to encounter some details about Captain Nemo's life they are never going to receive the full picture of who he is, where he comes from, and why he is so set on revenge. When the novel concludes, the three main characters escape captivity, and Nemo and the submarine's fates are unknown. The narrator, Professor Aronnax, despite being held captive against his will, expresses his hope that Captain Nemo survived the storm that nearly took all their lives. It is up to readers to determine whether they think Nemo survived and fill in any blanks about his history. Here is a quote from the novel in which the Professor is considering how he's never going to find out who Nemo is (the same struggle all readers are faced with): Perhaps I would never know who he was, where he came from, where he was going, but I could see the man more and more distinctly from the scientist. It was not common misanthropy that had enclosed Captain Nemo and his companions in the flanks of the Nautilus but a monstrous or sublime hatred that time could not diminish. Luckily, Jules Verne wrote another novel in which Captain Nemo plays an interesting part —The Mysterious Island, published in 1875. Book Title: Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the SeaBook Description: 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea' by Jules Verne is a thrilling and interesting novel that follows three men kept captive onboard a mysterious submarine. Book Author: Jules VerneBook Edition: First EditionBook Format: PaperbackPublisher - Organization: Penguin ClassicsDate published: November 20, 1871Illustrator: Alphonse de Neuville and Edouard RiouISBN: 978-0-14-039069-8Number Of Pages: 422 Story Characters Setting Writing Style Dialogue Conclusion Lasting Effect on Readers Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea Review 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea' by Jules Verne is one of the French writer's best novels. It is set onboard the Nautilus submarine and deep within the world's oceans. The book is filled with mystery, adventure, and at times, dense scientific language. Pros Captain Nemo's character The setting The unknown elements Cons Verne's use of language The length Lack of satisfying conclusion Join Book Analysis for Free! Exclusive to Members Get access now Home - Jules Verne - Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea - Review B.A. in English, B.F.A. in Fine Art, and B.A. in Art Histories from East Carolina University. Emma Baldwin, a graduate of East Carolina University, has a deep-rooted passion for literature. She serves as a key contributor to the Book Analysis team with years of experience. The complete review - fiction Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas by Jules Verne general information | review summaries | our review | links | about the author French title: Vingt mille lieues sous les mers Translated and with an Introduction by William Butcher There are numerous other translations, including by Lewis Page Mercier (1872), Henry Frith (1876), Anthony Bonner (1962), Mendor T. Brunetti (1969), Emanuel J. Mickel (1992), Frederick Paul Walter (2010), and David Coward (2016) There have been several film versions of Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas, including the 1954 film directed by Richard Fleischer and starring Kirk Douglas, James Mason, and Peter Lorre - Return to top of the page - Our Assessment: B+ : good adventure-fun See our review for fuller assessment. Review Summaries Source Rating Date Reviewer Extrapolation . Spring/2001 Jie Lu 19th-Cent. French St. . Fall/Winter 2000/1 Arthur B. Evans From the Reviews: "Butcher's translation of this novel, thus, exemplifies the ideal of adequate style as well as strong details. One of the strong impressions that the reader gets from browsing over this edition is the ultra-sincerity and high-standard scholarship of the translator, as well as his minute consideration for the reader's convenience, knowledge necessity, and referential need." - Jie Lu, Extrapolation "So how do Butcher's new "Oxford World's Classics" versions of these three Jules Verne novels stack up against the many other English translations that are currently available? The answer is simple. In terms of their textual integrity and scholarly substance, they are the best of the lot. Although I may occasionally quibble over his choice of a specific word or phrase (...). Butcher's translations are generally excellent and very faithful to Verne's original prose and stylistic idiosyncracies." - Arthur B. Evans, Nineteenth-Century French Studies Please note that these ratings solely represent the complete review's biased interpretation and subjective opinion, not necessarily the views of the reviewers. Similarly the illustrative quotes chosen here are merely those the complete review subjectively believes represent the tenor and judgment of the review as a whole. We acknowledge (and remind and warn you) that they may, in fact, be entirely unrepresentative of the actual reviews by any other measure. - Return to top of the page - The complete review's Review:

For many of Jules Verne's books – certainly the better-known ones, such as this one – readers have (and should know they have) a choice among translations. Unfortunately, Verne's work has often been manhandled in translation -- certainly in the case of Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas where, as William Butcher notes in the Introduction to his own (1998) translation (the one under review here): Lewis Mercier's 1872 translation was typical of the time: adequate on 'style' but extremely weak on details. Also, about 22 per cent of the novel is missing ! Since then, over half of the editions have reproduced Mercier, many of them making further minor changes without, unfortunately, referring back to the French; and it is often the editions that protest the most about poor translation which are themselves the least faithful and the most Mercier-like ! Butcher notes, correctly, that: "A great majority of the current English editions of Verne continue to be of an unacceptable standard" -- suggesting also that: "this, I would claim, is the main reason for his poor reputation". Even in English, Verne is a popular and well-known author, but Butcher is correct that he is not taken as seriously or valued as highly as his work warrants, with the versions on offer -- often also edited and marketed for a younger-readers' market -- too often confirming the opinion that the work is just not that good. So, if the originals are out of reach, it is important to be aware of what translation one is reading. As far as Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas goes, Butcher's already gets one of the basics right, in his being a complete translation; there are others one can more or less safely turn to as well -- with the general rule of thumb being that the more recent the better holding truer for Verne than for most classical authors. (I have not seen the David Coward translation (2016), now published in the Penguin Classics series, but that too seems likely to be a good alternative.) Butcher's introduction to this Oxford World's Classics edition is also a notch above the usual classics-introduction -- not least because Butcher takes both author and work seriously (as, as noted, Verne simply often isn't). Aside also from a variety of interesting observations regarding the translation ("There are perhaps 2,000 rare words and proper names in the French edition, but more than 100 are incorrect") he also suggests a number of interpretations and approaches to the novel in a jaunty manner; his Introduction is 'scholarly' but not too dry or dense or long. He also is critical where appropriate, including in his Notes on the Text and Translation, where he points out some of the novel's numerous implausibilities. The fairly extensive endnotes -- Explanatory Notes -- also both usefully explain and comment on the text, and are of particular interest in also pointing out the textual variants, as there are two extant manuscript versions of the novel, with the occasional interesting variation. The novel is narrated by Pierre Aronnax, a forty-year-old lecturer at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. (As Butcher points out: "Aronnax is stated to be a modest 'lecturer' ('professeur suppléant'), and not a professor, as has been the usual translation to date.") He has a notable publication under his belt -- the two-volume The Mysteries of the Ocean Depths -- but more recently has been on assignment studying the Badlands of Nebraska. When the novel opens, in 1867, he is making his way back home -- at a time when there's been lots of buzz about a mysterious sea-object, sighted by numerous ships. When Aronnax is in New York he is invited -- by no less than the American Secretary to the Navy -- to join the Abraham Lincoln, a vessel being sent out to track and hunt down the mysterious sea-object, and of course he can not pass up that opportunity. Aronnax has considered the evidence carefully and formed a view, "based on the logic of facts", as to what the object might be, and he is absolutely certain that it is an enormous swimming mammal like a whale, fitted with a tusk. Aronnax is, of course, completely wrong. The expedition also includes fabled Canadian harpooner Ned Land, as well as Aronnax's completely devoted man Friday, Conseil. The hunt long comes up empty, but eventually they encounter the floating object -- but catching up with it only gets them so far. A collision with it flings Aronnax (and, it soon turns out, Ned) overboard -- with dutiful Conseil jumping in after his master ("I followed monsieur since I am in monsieur's service"). The trio are then saved by the mysterious object -- the huge submarine that is the Nautilus. It's captain is a man: "who has broken with humanity" -- and one who is not pleased about having to deal with these unwelcome outsiders. This Nemo is a man who: Not only had he placed himself outside humanity's laws, but he had made himself independent, free in the strictest sense of the world, out of all reach ! It is, of course, a great set-up for a story -- now completed with the three new passengers who are accepted into the fold but are, in fact, prisoners, welcome on the ride, but not allowed to get off. As Nemo tells Aronnax: You came and discovered a secret no man on earth must penetrate -- the secret of my entire existence. And you imagine that I am going to send you back to shore, where nothing is known about me any longer ? Never ! By holding you, it is not you that I am protecting, but myself. Nemo does know how to sweeten the deal, at least for Aronnax: the Nautilus is on a journey of discovery, after all, and can reveal to Aronnax secrets of the sea that he would never otherwise have an opportunity to see And, while the living-space is somewhat limited, it really is quite comfortable -- even luxurious -- and offers, besides many fine art works on display, an impressive library of twelve-thousand volumes. Not that they have much choice, but Aronnax: can definitely see that this is also quite an opportunity for him. Ned, of course, is much less pleased -- and his increasing eagerness and then desperation to return to land and freedom help supply some of the tension in the story. (Conseil, of course, will do whatever his master wishes.) The mystery of Nemo also makes for some of the suspense of the story, as the captain long does little to explain himself or his past, or his reasons for removing himself from the rest of humanity -- despite wealth so great that he could do more or less as he wishes, anywhere. As Aronnax offhandedly mentions to Aronnax: "You must be very well off then?" "Ininitely sir, and without undue difficulty I could pay off the ten billion francs of France's debt." Conseil thinks it's simple enough. The worthy fellow persisted in seeing in the captain of the Nautilus, merely one of those unrecognized scientists, who return humanity's indifference with mistrust. For him he was still a misunderstood genius, tired of the disappointments of the earth, who had taken sanctuary in that inaccessible environment where he could freely exercise his abilities. But in my view this theory explained only one of Captain Nemo's sides. Indeed, Nemo clearly is a driven man, and a great deal weighs on him. But it is only at the very end that Aronnax recognizes the extent of it: It was not common misanthropy that had enclosed Captain Nemo and his companions in the flanks of the Nautilus, but a monstrous or sublime hatred that time could not diminish. For ten months, Aronnax and his companions roam the seas with Nemo, a voyage richly imagined by Verne as he opens up a whole new world underwater. Several of the high-points are surprisingly brief -- a visit to Atlantis; the crossing from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean (the "uncrossable isthmus" of Suez, pre-canal, crossed in a few minutes) -- but the variety of adventure is great and often genuinely thrilling. There are encounters with hostile natives -- in a rare on-land episode --, sperm whales, and giant squid; walks on the ocean-bottom; and a foray underneath Antarctica that almost leaves the submerged submarine ice-bound. Ultimately, there is a showdown, and a Maelstrom -- "The Maelstrom ! Could a more frightening word sound in our ears in a more desperate situation ?" -- while in perhaps too convenient but certainly an appropriate touch Aronnax doesn't quite miss the boat but does the climactic action, as: "My head struck an iron spar; and because of this violent impact I lost consciousness". Aronnax is a fine narrator for such a tale - a typical Vernian one, as Butcher also notes in his Introduction ("They exist to narrate, and narrate to exist") --, and, while hard-working and studious, also somewhat limited and simple; one can see why he's never made it beyond "lecturer". Part of the fun of the novel comes also with just how wrong he is about so much, beginning with his certainty that what turns out to be a man-made submarine is a mammal. The situation of the captured trio as prisoners is also an interesting element in the novel -- with Ned increasingly desperate to get free while Aronnax is often ambivalent. This, like much here -- so also Nemo's deep, dark issues --, arguably isn't really mined for all its worth, but this detracts less than in most fiction; leaving much about the characters to the reader's imagination. Verne does a good job of inflaming that. (It's perhaps one reason Verne is so often thought as a young-adult or even children's author, with more mature readers expecting (or demanding) fuller character-portraits where younger readers are satisfied with strong outlines which they easily fill in in their minds' eyes.) Throughout, Verne also offers up the usual lists and details -- as Butcher also remarks upon in his Introduction (including noting: "There are indeed a bewildering number of common and proper names in the novel") -- but this cataloguing rarely bogs the narrative down -- helped, in no small part, by the incredible variety that Verne's premise offers him, both in the underwater realm and the island of civilization that is the Nautilus (with its great library, among much else). Even for those familiar with the story, from childhood reading or the movie versions, Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas remains good fun and a good read. This Oxford World's Classics edition is a very good one to rely on, not least in also providing supporting material that suggests some of the additional, less obvious layers and references. - M.A.Orthofer, 11 November 2022 - Return to top of the page - Links: Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas: Reviews: Jules Verne: Other books by Jules Verne under review: The Meteor Hunt The Self-Propelled Island Other books of interest under review: - Return to top of the page - About the Author: French author Jules Verne (1828-1905) is one of the bestselling writers of all time. - Return to top of the page - © 2022 the complete review Main | the New | the Rest | Review Index | Links Full spoilers for the entire book below. Proceed with caution. For other book reviews, click HERE: Title: 20,000 Leagues Under the SeaAuthor: Jules VernePublication Date: originally serialized from March 1869 through June 1870 in Magasin d'éducation et de récréation. A deluxe octavo edition, published by Hetzel in November 1871 (novel), 2017 (audio)Publisher: Pierre-Jules Hetzel (novel) and Blackstone Audio, Inc. (audio)Narrated By: David LinskiRecording time: 11 hrs and 13 mins via Wiki: During the year 1866, ships of various nationalities sight a mysterious sea monster, which, it is later suggested, might be a gigantic narwhal. The U.S. government assembles an expedition in New York City to find and destroy the monster. Professor Pierre Aronnax, a French marine biologist and the story's narrator, is in town at the time and receives a last-minute invitation to join the expedition; he accepts. Canadian whaler and master harpooner Ned Land and Aronnax's faithful manservant Conseil are also among the participants. The expedition leaves Brooklyn aboard the United States Navy frigate Abraham Lincoln, then travels south around Cape Horn into the Pacific Ocean. After a five-month search ending off Japan, the frigate locates and attacks the monster, which damages the ship's rudder. Aronnax and Land are hurled into the sea, and Conseil jumps into the water after them. They survive by climbing onto the "monster", which, they are startled to find, is a futuristic submarine. They wait on the deck of the vessel until morning, when they are captured, hauled inside, and introduced to the submarine's mysterious constructor and commander, Captain Nemo. The rest of the novel describes the protagonists' adventures aboard the Nautilus, which was built in secrecy and now roams the seas beyond the reach of land-based governments. In self-imposed exile, Captain Nemo seems to have a dual motivation — a quest for scientific knowledge and a desire to escape terrestrial civilization. Nemo explains that his submarine is electrically powered and can conduct advanced marine research; he also tells his new passengers that his secret existence means he cannot let them leave — they must remain on board permanently. They visit many ocean regions, some factual and others fictitious. The travelers view coral formations, sunken vessels from the Battle of Vigo Bay, the Antarctic ice barrier, the Transatlantic telegraph cable, and the legendary underwater realm of Atlantis. They even travel to the South Pole and are trapped in an upheaval of an iceberg on the way back, caught in a narrow gallery of ice from which they are forced to dig themselves out. The passengers also don diving suits, hunt sharks and other marine fauna with air guns in the underwater forests of Crespo Island, and also attend an undersea funeral for a crew member who died during a mysterious collision experienced by the Nautilus. When the submarine returns to the Atlantic Ocean, a school of giant squid ("devilfish") attacks the vessel and kills another crewman. The novel's later pages suggest that Captain Nemo went into undersea exile after his homeland was conquered and his family slaughtered by a powerful imperialist nation. Following the episode of the devilfish, Nemo largely avoids Aronnax, who begins to side with Ned Land. Ultimately, the Nautilus is attacked by a warship from the mysterious nation that has caused Nemo such suffering. Carrying out his quest for revenge, Nemo — whom Aronnax dubs an "archangel of hatred" — rams the ship below her waterline and sends her to the bottom, much to the professor's horror. Afterward, Nemo kneels before a portrait of his deceased wife and children, then sinks into a deep depression. Circumstances aboard the submarine change drastically: watches are no longer kept, and the vessel wanders about aimlessly. Ned becomes so reclusive that Conseil fears for the harpooner's life. One morning, however, Ned announces that they are in sight of land and have a chance to escape. Professor Aronnax is more than ready to leave Captain Nemo, who now horrifies him, yet he is still drawn to the man. Fearing that Nemo's very presence could weaken his resolve, he avoids contact with the captain. Before their departure, however, the professor eavesdrops on Nemo and overhears him calling out in anguish, "O almighty God! Enough! Enough!" Aronnax immediately joins his companions, and they carry out their escape plans, but as they board the submarine's skiff, they realize that the Nautilus has seemingly blundered into the ocean's deadliest whirlpool, the Moskenstraumen, more commonly known as the "Maelstrom". Nevertheless, they manage to escape and find refuge on an island off the coast of Norway. The submarine's ultimate fate, however, remains unknown. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea is a science fiction classic that has unfortunately become painfully boring a century and a half after its initial publication. It is difficult for me to place myself into the mind of the novel's original audience, however, my speculation is that 20,000 Leagues developed its acclaim due to the mental pictures it painted in the minds of readers in a society prior to pictures, video, and easy travel. I do not need those pictures painted. I don't have to imagine them because there are innumerable videos of ocean life. Today, bereft of any magic that comes with shining a light of speculation onto the unknown, the story reads like a travelogue, with a lot of info-dump, and not much drama. Is the idea of seeing life beneath the waves intriguing? Definitely. However, I can do that from my desk chair with the YouTube app. I needed a story and this novel mostly only hints at anything dramatic. Professor Pierre Aronnax and his colleagues are captured. That fact is not a huge issue in the novel until near the end, shortly before they escape. They get to see some cool sights as the submarine traverses the globe. The story does a lot of info-dump on their location, and provides a lot of boring information on sea life and coral in that place, and then they move to the next info-dump location. Aronnax and his friends eventually escape. We learn that Captain Nemo was motivated by some unknown nation's attacks against his own unnamed country and that his family apparently died. We learn he burns for revenge. That's pretty much it, though. It felt like Verne gives the reader an introduction to a submarine version of Captain Ahab but then never spends enough time with Captain Nemo for the reader to really know him. What we do learn happens quite late in the novel and at enough of a distance that it has no emotional impact on the story. One particularly irritating scene from the book was the submarine's discovery of Atlantis. ATLANTIS. They get there, they look around briefly, and then they leave. That's it. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea is famous for its depiction of a battle with a giant squid. However, it did not turn out to be much of a battle. The crew got out of the sub to fight the squid. One of Aronnax's colleagues, Ned Land, is nearly killed, but then he is not. I was definitely let down by this scene. If you are a science fiction historian, I suppose you should probably read this book. However, I do not recommend it if you are reading for the purpose of enjoyment. Jump to ratings and reviewsWhen an unidentified "monster" threatens international shipping, French oceanographer Pierre Aronnax and his unflappable assistant Conseil join an expedition organized by the US Navy to hunt down and destroy the menace. After months of fruitless searching, they finally grapple with their quarry, but Aronnax, Conseil, and the brash Canadian harpooner Ned Land are thrown overboard in the attack, only to find that the "monster" is actually a futuristic submarine, the Nautilus, commanded by a shadowy, mystical, preternaturally imposing man who calls himself Captain Nemo. This begins a journey of 20,000 leagues—nearly 50,000 miles—that will take Captain Nemo, his crew, and these three adventurers on a journey of discovery through undersea forests, coral graveyards, miles-deep trenches, and even the sunken ruins of Atlantis. Jules Verne's novel of undersea exploration has been captivating readers ever since its first publication in 1870, and Frederick Paul Walter's reader-friendly, scientifically meticulous translation of this visionary science fiction classic is complete and unabridged down to the smallest substantive detail.GenresClassicsScience FictionFictionAdventureFantasyFranceAudiobook 16296 people are currently reading180830 people want to readDisplaying 1 - 30 of 11,264 reviewsMay 16, 2023Hands down the WORST book I've read all year.I mean, there's boring and then there's mind-numbing. 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea is definitely the latter. I was actually looking forward to listening to this. It's supposed to be a classic action/adventure sci-fi book, right? And it's not an overly long book, which made me assume it was a pretty compact story. Plus, I usually have better luck when it comes to these older novels if I listen to the audiobook instead of trying to wade through all the crunchy dialogue with my eyeballs. So, between those factors, I thought this would be a complete winner.But ho-ly shit this was terrible. Terrible! Ok, how to describe this book?Alright. If a really tedious nature show fucked a 5th grade word problem and didn't use a condom - 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea would be their bastard child.The vast majority of

this thing:Latitude 54, Longitude 45.

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The license may not give you all of the permissions necessary for your intended use. For example, other rights such as publicity, privacy, or moral rights may limit how you use the material. Article written by Emma Baldwin B.A. in English, B.F.A. in Fine Art, and B.A. in Art Histories from East Carolina University. This is a novel that, in my opinion, is filled with mystery, adventure, and science writing in equal parts. While, there's much to be enjoyed; there is a seemingly equal portion of the novel that may test readers' abilities to remain focused on the content and interested in such complicated information as the amount of water the submarine displaces, how it manufactures air, and how much pressure it can withstand. For this reader, Captain Nemo's character was the best part of Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. Although his name is often cited as one of the most famous of Jules Verne's literary creations, without reading about his adventures personally, one cannot appreciate his depth of character and understand his struggle to both find both peace and achieve revenge. As the novel begins, Captain Nemo is introduced as a charming, intelligent, and dangerous captor who is holding the three main characters against their will. For the narrator especially, Captain Nemo and his Nautilus, along with his vast collection of scientific achievements, are overwhelming. Rather than fight against his capture, Professor Aronnax is enthralled by everything he sees. He sets Ned Land's worries to the side and explores the ship. After having finished the novel, it's clear that Nemo hoped the Professor would do just this. He knew that if he could divide the three captives that he'd have a better chance of keeping them under his control and ensuring that he could continue on his quest for revenge. Despite learning details about the Captain throughout the book, his character remains a mystery. From his introduction, to the revelation of his psychosis and his desire for revenge, I was captivated. One can't help but wonder what his origin story is and how he came to have the resources necessary to build the Nautilus. Plus, how could he entice his crew into joining him in a life under the sea? (Their origin story is another mystery that Verne only alludes to.) Here is an example of the skillful language Verne employed to ensure readers are drawn into his underwater mystery. Nemo says: I am not what you call a civilized man! I have done with society entirely, for reasons which I alone have the right of appreciating. I do not, therefore, obey its laws, and I desire you never to allude to them before me again! Here, readers are provided with a hint of the rage behind Nemo's facade of intellectual pursuit. There is something darker going on, and it was this mystery, more than anything that inspired me to continue reading the novel. This novel is often cited as one of adventure and exploration. Both of these things, and more, are true about Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea. The novel includes wonderful passages like: The sea is everything. It covers seven tenths of the terrestrial globe. Its breath is pure and healthy. It is an immense desert, where man is never lonely, for he feels life stirring on all sides. The sea is only the embodiment of a supernatural and wonderful existence. It is nothing but love and emotion; it is the Living Infinite. Quotes like the above are the reason that most readers become interested in Jules Verne's writing. And for good reason, there are many sections of this book that paint a beautiful picture of the sea and romanticize ideas of exploration and discovery. Undoubtedly, many elements of Jules Verne's novel are enthralling and original. But, his long passages of scientific descriptions of the Nautilus submarine were the stand-out low point. Although some details were necessary, and others more than welcome, several chapters contained long passages of scientific descriptions of the submarine. Nemo's collections, the way in which the sub was powered by electricity, and less than memorable descriptions of the ocean the crew was exploring. For example, here is a quote from Chapter XI in which Nemo is talking about the submarine's dimensions: Here, M. Aronnax, are the several dimensions of the boat you are in. It is an elongated cylinder with conical ends. It is very like a cigar in shape, a shape already adopted in London in several constructions of the same sort [...]. These two dimensions enable you to obtain by a simple calculation the surface and cubic contents of the Nautilus. Its area measures 6 032 feet, and its contents about 1,500 cubic yards; that is to say, when completely immersed it displaces 50,000 feet of water, or weighs 1,500 tons. This passage is a hint of what some of the more scientific and descriptive sections in the novel are like. For most readers, it is likely that long sections of this kind of language are going to test one's ability to remain focused and interested in what's being described. As the novel progresses, it becomes clear that while readers are going to encounter some details about Captain Nemo's life they are never going to receive the full picture of who he is, where he comes from, and why he is so set on revenge. When the novel concludes, the three main characters escape captivity, and Nemo and the submarine's fates are unknown. The narrator, Professor Aronnax, despite being held captive against his will, expresses his hope that Captain Nemo survived the storm that nearly took all their lives. It is up to readers to determine whether they think Nemo survived and fill in any blanks about his history. Here is a quote from the novel in which the Professor is considering how he's never going to find out who Nemo is (the same struggle all readers are faced with): Perhaps I would never know who he was, where he came from, where he was going, but I could see the man more and more distinctly from the scientist. It was not common misanthropy that had enclosed Captain Nemo and his companions in the flanks of the Nautilus but a monstrous or sublime hatred that time could not diminish. Luckily, Jules Verne wrote another novel in which Captain Nemo plays an interesting part —The Mysterious Island, published in 1875. Book Title: Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the SeaBook Description: 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea' by Jules Verne is a thrilling and interesting novel that follows three men kept captive onboard a mysterious submarine. Book Author: Jules VerneBook Edition: First EditionBook Format: PaperbackPublisher - Organization: Penguin ClassicsDate published: November 20, 1871Illustrator: Alphonse de Neuville and Edouard RiouISBN: 978-0-14-039069-8Number Of Pages: 422 Story Characters Setting Writing Style Dialogue Conclusion Lasting Effect on Readers Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea Review 'Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea' by Jules Verne is one of the French writer's best novels. It is set onboard the Nautilus submarine and deep within the world's oceans. The book is filled with mystery, adventure, and at times, dense scientific language. Pros Captain Nemo's character The setting The unknown elements Cons Verne's use of language The length Lack of satisfying conclusion Join Book Analysis for Free! Exclusive to Members Get access now Home - Jules Verne - Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea - Review B.A. in English, B.F.A. in Fine Art, and B.A. in Art Histories from East Carolina University. Emma Baldwin, a graduate of East Carolina University, has a deep-rooted passion for literature. She serves as a key contributor to the Book Analysis team with years of experience. The complete review - fiction Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Seas by Jules Verne general information | review summaries | our review | links | about the author French title: Vingt mille lieues sous les mers Translated and with an Introduction by William Butcher There are numerous other translations, including by Lewis Page Mercier (1872), Henry Frith (1876), Anthony Bonner (1962), Mendor T. Brunetti (1969), Emanuel J. Mickel (1992), Frederick Paul Walter (2010), and David Coward (2016) There have been several film versions of Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas, including the 1954 film directed by Richard Fleischer and starring Kirk Douglas, James Mason, and Peter Lorre - Return to top of the page - Our Assessment: B+ : good adventure-fun See our review for fuller assessment. Review Summaries Source Rating Date Reviewer Extrapolation . Spring/2001 Jie Lu 19th-Cent. French St. . Fall/Winter 2000/1 Arthur B. Evans From the Reviews: "Butcher's translation of this novel, thus, exemplifies the ideal of adequate style as well as strong details. One of the strong impressions that the reader gets from browsing over this edition is the ultra-sincerity and high-standard scholarship of the translator, as well as his minute consideration for the reader's convenience, knowledge necessity, and referential need." - Jie Lu, Extrapolation "So how do Butcher's new "Oxford World's Classics" versions of these three Jules Verne novels stack up against the many other English translations that are currently available? The answer is simple. In terms of their textual integrity and scholarly substance, they are the best of the lot. Although I may occasionally quibble over his choice of a specific word or phrase (...). Butcher's translations are generally excellent and very faithful to Verne's original prose and stylistic idiosyncracies." - Arthur B. Evans, Nineteenth-Century French Studies Please note that these ratings solely represent the complete review's biased interpretation and subjective opinion, not necessarily the views of the reviewers. Similarly the illustrative quotes chosen here are merely those the complete review subjectively believes represent the tenor and judgment of the review as a whole. We acknowledge (and remind and warn you) that they may, in fact, be entirely unrepresentative of the actual reviews by any other measure. - Return to top of the page - The complete review's Review:

For many of Jules Verne's books – certainly the better-known ones, such as this one – readers have (and should know they have) a choice among translations. Unfortunately, Verne's work has often been manhandled in translation -- certainly in the case of Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas where, as William Butcher notes in the Introduction to his own (1998) translation (the one under review here): Lewis Mercier's 1872 translation was typical of the time: adequate on 'style' but extremely weak on details. Also, about 22 per cent of the novel is missing ! Since then, over half of the editions have reproduced Mercier, many of them making further minor changes without, unfortunately, referring back to the French; and it is often the editions that protest the most about poor translation which are themselves the least faithful and the most Mercier-like ! Butcher notes, correctly, that: "A great majority of the current English editions of Verne continue to be of an unacceptable standard" -- suggesting also that: "this, I would claim, is the main reason for his poor reputation". Even in English, Verne is a popular and well-known author, but Butcher is correct that he is not taken as seriously or valued as highly as his work warrants, with the versions on offer -- often also edited and marketed for a younger-readers' market -- too often confirming the opinion that the work is just not that good. So, if the originals are out of reach, it is important to be aware of what translation one is reading. As far as Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas goes, Butcher's already gets one of the basics right, in his being a complete translation; there are others one can more or less safely turn to as well -- with the general rule of thumb being that the more recent the better holding truer for Verne than for most classical authors. (I have not seen the David Coward translation (2016), now published in the Penguin Classics series, but that too seems likely to be a good alternative.) Butcher's introduction to this Oxford World's Classics edition is also a notch above the usual classics-introduction -- not least because Butcher takes both author and work seriously (as, as noted, Verne simply often isn't). Aside also from a variety of interesting observations regarding the translation ("There are perhaps 2,000 rare words and proper names in the French edition, but more than 100 are incorrect") he also suggests a number of interpretations and approaches to the novel in a jaunty manner; his Introduction is 'scholarly' but not too dry or dense or long. He also is critical where appropriate, including in his Notes on the Text and Translation, where he points out some of the novel's numerous implausibilities. The fairly extensive endnotes -- Explanatory Notes -- also both usefully explain and comment on the text, and are of particular interest in also pointing out the textual variants, as there are two extant manuscript versions of the novel, with the occasional interesting variation. The novel is narrated by Pierre Aronnax, a forty-year-old lecturer at the Museum of Natural History in Paris. (As Butcher points out: "Aronnax is stated to be a modest 'lecturer' ('professeur suppléant'), and not a professor, as has been the usual translation to date.") He has a notable publication under his belt -- the two-volume The Mysteries of the Ocean Depths -- but more recently has been on assignment studying the Badlands of Nebraska. When the novel opens, in 1867, he is making his way back home -- at a time when there's been lots of buzz about a mysterious sea-object, sighted by numerous ships. When Aronnax is in New York he is invited -- by no less than the American Secretary to the Navy -- to join the Abraham Lincoln, a vessel being sent out to track and hunt down the mysterious sea-object, and of course he can not pass up that opportunity. Aronnax has considered the evidence carefully and formed a view, "based on the logic of facts", as to what the object might be, and he is absolutely certain that it is an enormous swimming mammal like a whale, fitted with a tusk. Aronnax is, of course, completely wrong. The expedition also includes fabled Canadian harpooner Ned Land, as well as Aronnax's completely devoted man Friday, Conseil. The hunt long comes up empty, but eventually they encounter the floating object -- but catching up with it only gets them so far. A collision with it flings Aronnax (and, it soon turns out, Ned) overboard -- with dutiful Conseil jumping in after his master ("I followed monsieur since I am in monsieur's service"). The trio are then saved by the mysterious object -- the huge submarine that is the Nautilus. It's captain is a man: "who has broken with humanity" -- and one who is not pleased about having to deal with these unwelcome outsiders. This Nemo is a man who: Not only had he placed himself outside humanity's laws, but he had made himself independent, free in the strictest sense of the world, out of all reach ! It is, of course, a great set-up for a story -- now completed with the three new passengers who are accepted into the fold but are, in fact, prisoners, welcome on the ride, but not allowed to get off. As Nemo tells Aronnax: You came and discovered a secret no man on earth must penetrate -- the secret of my entire existence. And you imagine that I am going to send you back to shore, where nothing is known about me any longer ? Never ! By holding you, it is not you that I am protecting, but myself. Nemo does know how to sweeten the deal, at least for Aronnax: the Nautilus is on a journey of discovery, after all, and can reveal to Aronnax secrets of the sea that he would never otherwise have an opportunity to see And, while the living-space is somewhat limited, it really is quite comfortable -- even luxurious -- and offers, besides many fine art works on display, an impressive library of twelve-thousand volumes. Not that they have much choice, but Aronnax: can definitely see that this is also quite an opportunity for him. Ned, of course, is much less pleased -- and his increasing eagerness and then desperation to return to land and freedom help supply some of the tension in the story. (Conseil, of course, will do whatever his master wishes.) The mystery of Nemo also makes for some of the suspense of the story, as the captain long does little to explain himself or his past, or his reasons for removing himself from the rest of humanity -- despite wealth so great that he could do more or less as he wishes, anywhere. As Aronnax offhandedly mentions to Aronnax: "You must be very well off then?" "Ininitely sir, and without undue difficulty I could pay off the ten billion francs of France's debt." Conseil thinks it's simple enough. The worthy fellow persisted in seeing in the captain of the Nautilus, merely one of those unrecognized scientists, who return humanity's indifference with mistrust. For him he was still a misunderstood genius, tired of the disappointments of the earth, who had taken sanctuary in that inaccessible environment where he could freely exercise his abilities. But in my view this theory explained only one of Captain Nemo's sides. Indeed, Nemo clearly is a driven man, and a great deal weighs on him. But it is only at the very end that Aronnax recognizes the extent of it: It was not common misanthropy that had enclosed Captain Nemo and his companions in the flanks of the Nautilus, but a monstrous or sublime hatred that time could not diminish. For ten months, Aronnax and his companions roam the seas with Nemo, a voyage richly imagined by Verne as he opens up a whole new world underwater. Several of the high-points are surprisingly brief -- a visit to Atlantis; the crossing from the Red Sea to the Mediterranean (the "uncrossable isthmus" of Suez, pre-canal, crossed in a few minutes) -- but the variety of adventure is great and often genuinely thrilling. There are encounters with hostile natives -- in a rare on-land episode --, sperm whales, and giant squid; walks on the ocean-bottom; and a foray underneath Antarctica that almost leaves the submerged submarine ice-bound. Ultimately, there is a showdown, and a Maelstrom -- "The Maelstrom ! Could a more frightening word sound in our ears in a more desperate situation ?" -- while in perhaps too convenient but certainly an appropriate touch Aronnax doesn't quite miss the boat but does the climactic action, as: "My head struck an iron spar; and because of this violent impact I lost consciousness". Aronnax is a fine narrator for such a tale - a typical Vernian one, as Butcher also notes in his Introduction ("They exist to narrate, and narrate to exist") --, and, while hard-working and studious, also somewhat limited and simple; one can see why he's never made it beyond "lecturer". Part of the fun of the novel comes also with just how wrong he is about so much, beginning with his certainty that what turns out to be a man-made submarine is a mammal. The situation of the captured trio as prisoners is also an interesting element in the novel -- with Ned increasingly desperate to get free while Aronnax is often ambivalent. This, like much here -- so also Nemo's deep, dark issues --, arguably isn't really mined for all its worth, but this detracts less than in most fiction; leaving much about the characters to the reader's imagination. Verne does a good job of inflaming that. (It's perhaps one reason Verne is so often thought as a young-adult or even children's author, with more mature readers expecting (or demanding) fuller character-portraits where younger readers are satisfied with strong outlines which they easily fill in in their minds' eyes.) Throughout, Verne also offers up the usual lists and details -- as Butcher also remarks upon in his Introduction (including noting: "There are indeed a bewildering number of common and proper names in the novel") -- but this cataloguing rarely bogs the narrative down -- helped, in no small part, by the incredible variety that Verne's premise offers him, both in the underwater realm and the island of civilization that is the Nautilus (with its great library, among much else). Even for those familiar with the story, from childhood reading or the movie versions, Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas remains good fun and a good read. This Oxford World's Classics edition is a very good one to rely on, not least in also providing supporting material that suggests some of the additional, less obvious layers and references. - M.A.Orthofer, 11 November 2022 - Return to top of the page - Links: Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Seas: Reviews: Jules Verne: Other books by Jules Verne under review: The Meteor Hunt The Self-Propelled Island Other books of interest under review: - Return to top of the page - About the Author: French author Jules Verne (1828-1905) is one of the bestselling writers of all time. - Return to top of the page - © 2022 the complete review Main | the New | the Best | the Rest | Review Index | Links Full spoilers for the entire book below. Proceed with caution. For other book reviews, click HERE: Title: 20,000 Leagues Under the SeaAuthor: Jules VernePublication Date: originally serialized from March 1869 through June 1870 in Magasin d'éducation et de récréation. A deluxe octavo edition, published by Hetzel in November 1871 (novel), 2017 (audio)Publisher: Pierre-Jules Hetzel (novel) and Blackstone Audio, Inc. (audio)Narrated By: David LinskiRecording time: 11 hrs and 13 mins via Wiki: During the year 1866, ships of various nationalities sight a mysterious sea monster, which, it is later suggested, might be a gigantic narwhal. The U.S. government assembles an expedition in New York City to find and destroy the monster. Professor Pierre Aronnax, a French marine biologist and the story's narrator, is in town at the time and receives a last-minute invitation to join the expedition; he accepts. Canadian whaler and master harpooner Ned Land and Aronnax's faithful manservant Conseil are also among the participants. The expedition leaves Brooklyn aboard the United States Navy frigate Abraham Lincoln, then travels south around Cape Horn into the Pacific Ocean. After a five-month search ending off Japan, the frigate locates and attacks the monster, which damages the ship's rudder. Aronnax and Land are hurled into the sea, and Conseil jumps into the water after them. They survive by climbing onto the "monster", which, they are startled to find, is a futuristic submarine. They wait on the deck of the vessel until morning, when they are captured, hauled inside, and introduced to the submarine's mysterious constructor and commander, Captain Nemo. The rest of the novel describes the protagonists' adventures aboard the Nautilus, which was built in secrecy and now roams the seas beyond the reach of land-based governments. In self-imposed exile, Captain Nemo seems to have a dual motivation — a quest for scientific knowledge and a desire to escape terrestrial civilization. Nemo explains that his submarine is electrically powered and can conduct advanced marine research; he also tells his new passengers that his secret existence means he cannot let them leave — they must remain on board permanently. They visit many ocean regions, some factual and others fictitious. The travelers view coral formations, sunken vessels from the Battle of Vigo Bay, the Antarctic ice barrier, the Transatlantic telegraph