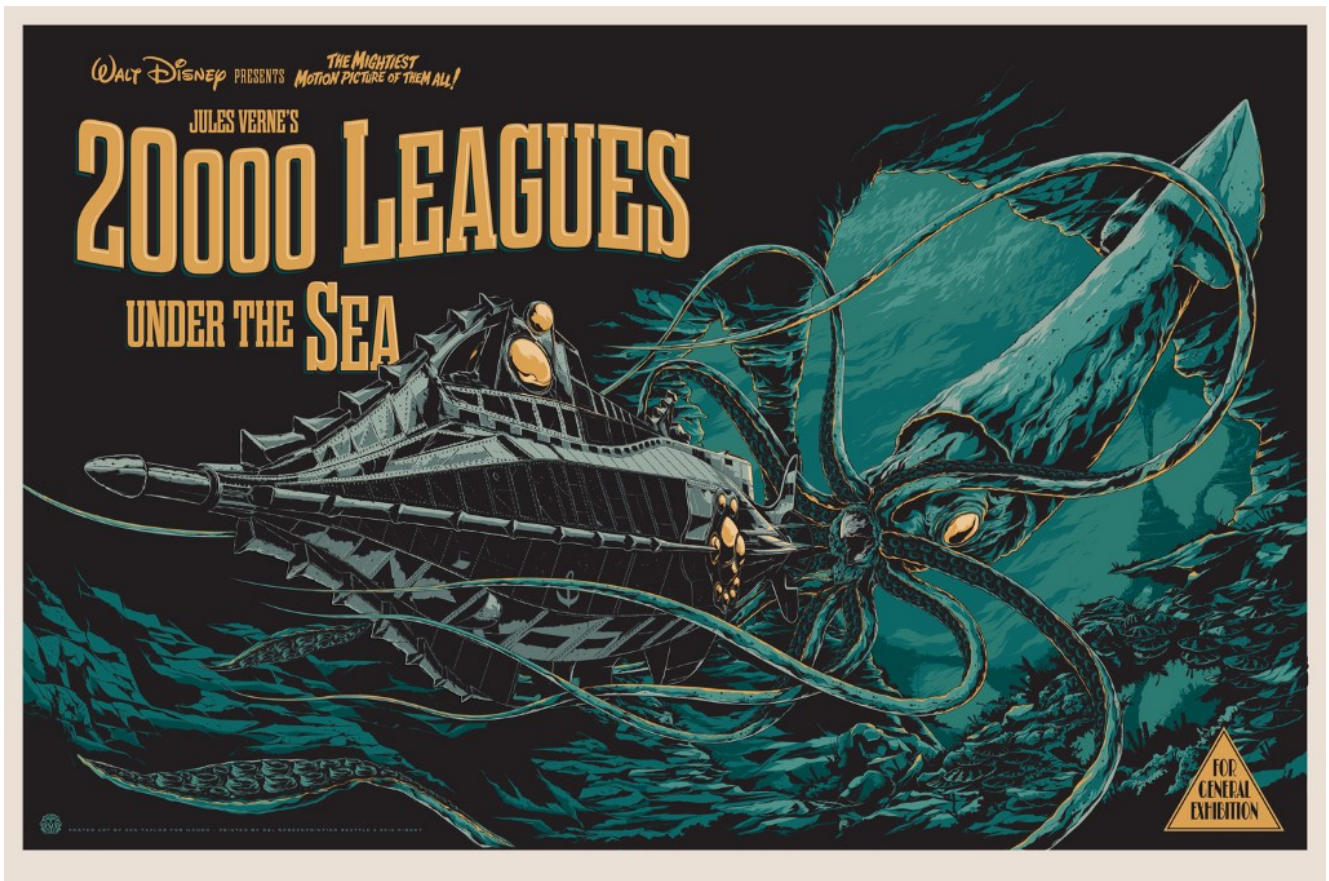


Jules Verne! Inventors! Inventions!

Explorers, Mad Scientists... Where it all got started

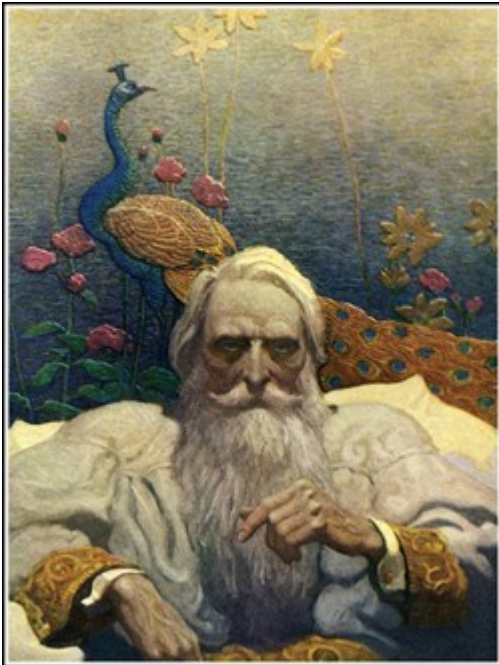


"20,000 Leagues Under the Sea" (1954) starring Kirk Douglas and James Mason, Walt Disney Pictures.

Children's nonfiction is full of biographies of Thomas Edison and his incandescent light, Ben Franklin and his electrical kite, and Leonardo Da Vinci and his screwy war-machines. Kids curious about how-things-came-to-be can also read books about the invention of such things as the pencil and the trampoline. But when it comes to fiction about inventors and inventions, there is only one giant: Jules Verne.

In his first book and later in his better known ***Around the World in Eighty Days*** (1873), Verne featured the hot-air balloon as a novel means of transportation; Frank Baum took

note and subsequently sent the Wizard of Oz (a character full of hot air) up in his own gas bag. While in this book Phileas Fogg circumnavigates the globe, in other stories Verne sent his characters to the Moon and to the antipodes of Antarctica.



Captain Nemo from “The Mysterious Island,” illustrated by N.C. Wyeth. Scribners’ Illustrated Classics series, Atheneum, \$20 (hardback)


With ***Journey to the Center of the Earth*** (1864), however, this Frenchman plunged not upwards and outwards but downwards and inwards. Following that same vector, ***Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*** (1870) featured the new device of the steam-driven submarine, in this case captained by Nemo, a genius inventor and moody recluse. Captain Nemo would also later appear in what is reckoned Verne’s best work, ***The Mysterious Island*** (1875), where he is the unseen inspiration to a group of prisoners from the American Civil War who are mysteriously transported to a South Seas island and who have to reinvent bricks, iron, gunpowder, and more in order to survive. If this sounds like a familiar television program, remember Verne was there first.

Verne inspired everyone. His fascination with modes of transport can be seen behind the flying flivver in “Chitty Chitty Bang Bang” and throughout that series which begins *Tom*

*Swift and His Airship, Tom Swift and His Motor-Cycle, Tom Swift and His Motor-Boat, etc. Phileas Fogg, his sunny and zany scientist, has offspring in the hapless daddy inventor in "Honey, I Shrunk the Kids." His moody Captain Nemo in **The Mysterious Island** eventually gave birth to the mad and over-reaching scientists who appear in H.G. Wells' *The Island of Dr. Moreau* and Steven Spielberg's "Jurassic Park."*

Verne's works have been made into a dozen films, including a new "[Around the World](#)" (with Jackie Chan) and the classic "[20,000 Leagues](#)" (with Kirk Douglas). But if you want to see where it all got started, his books are inexpensive and close at hand.

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