



In his own country - France - Jules Verne has always been more than an author of children's books. Loved as well by adults, and teens, his stories - in their original language - always conveyed more concepts and ideas to French-speakers than to English-readers.

Until the 1960s, English translations were not completely faithful to Verne's words. How did this happen?

According to the Smithsonian, which has some early editions of his richly illustrated books:

*Although in England and America Verne is considered mainly a children's author, in France he is considered both an adult and a juvenile author, much as Lewis Carroll is in England. Part of the reason for this may be the poor translations of Verne's works into English, with scientific omissions and changes which conflicted with the political and religious views of the Victorian Empire.*

Verne's most popular works were the most impacted by these changes. Professor Walter Miller, from New York University, noted the damage in his translation of *Twenty Thousand Leagues under the Sea*. Today, updated translations are providing today's English-speakers what they had been denied for so many decades.

Not just a teller of tales, Verne was an amazing predictor of events:

*Although Verne is commonly referred to as the "father of science fiction" he is much more a writer of "scientific fiction." He was the first person to recognize that the new world of 19th century scientific discovery offered a framework for adventure novels where the science of the day played an important role. Indeed the science was accurate, but it required a hundred years or more for technology to advance to the point where his inventions and adventures became reality.*

*The traversal of the Arctic Ocean under the ice in 1959 by the USS Nautilus made a reality of the undersea adventures of Captain Nemo and his Nautilus. The Apollo project made From the Earth to the Moon and a Trip around It a preliminary exercise. Even the fanciful balloon voyage across Africa in Five Weeks in a Balloon pales in comparison with current 'round the world balloon exploits.*

Thanks to the generosity of the Smithsonian, we can explore some of the original, engraved illustrations which helped to make Jules Verne - and his books - so popular.

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Quoted passages from a January, 2006 Smithsonian article by Norman Wolcott.

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## Media Stream



### Jules Verne - Writer of Scientific Fiction

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