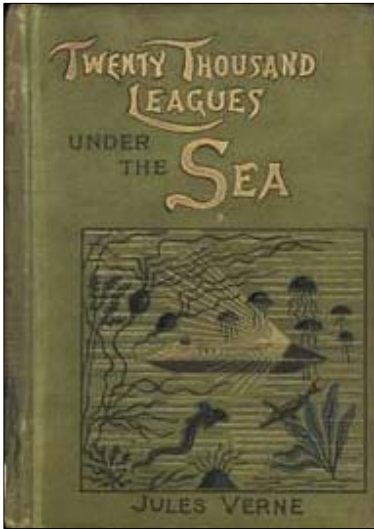


## [13.0] DESIGNERS NOTES



For a book written almost 140 years ago, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* holds up remarkably well for today's reader. Jules Verne knew how to please his audience and his imagination was second to none (well, maybe H.G. Wells, who loved the works of Jules Verne, but that's an argument for another day.) It doesn't match the

pace of a Jerry Bruckheimer summer action movie, and you will learn more about fish species classification than you probably want to know, but the adventure held within the pages of the book is still an exhilarating ride.

My personal adventure with this classic tale began with a search of available ebooks. (I'm certain that Jules Verne, of all people, would appreciate the fact that his books are available on computers, phones, and specialized ebook readers.) Reading *Twenty Thousand Leagues* again for the first time in at least 20 years, I was captivated by the underwater adventures of Captain Nemo and the *Nautilus*. As a game designer, I often see the world through "designer vision" and, while navigating the pages of this book, it was readily apparent to me that this story could make a great game.

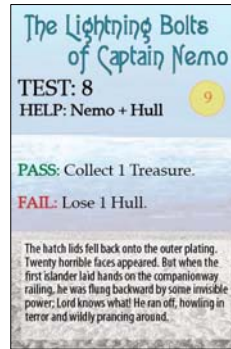
### The Game's The Thing

So how does one go about adapting this book for a game? First, I visited the local bookstore and picked up an actual "dead tree" version of the novel after finishing the ebook. Then I read the book again, but this time I took notes and underlined passages that seemed ripe for adaptation to the game's Adventure cards that I envisioned (focusing my designer vision). Before a single ASCII character had been typed in the rules or prototype counter laid out, the core gambling mechanic / resource management aspect, and the concept of the Adventure cards, had already been designed on my mental "drawing board" space.

Next, I wanted to hammer out the basic mechanics and start building the first prototype. (You should always build a prototype as early as possible; designing without prototyping is like hopping around on one foot instead of walking around on two feet.) I never thought of



The *Nemo's War* prototype playtest tracks and tables.



making *Nemo's War* anything but a solitaire game. Nemo stood alone against the world and, in my mind, the player should as well.

The adventure cards provided an opportunity to add text directly from the source. Each card was designed to represent roughly one chapter of the book. One of the more enjoyable tasks was reading the book again with an eye to selecting the

appropriate text from each chapter as represented by the Adventure card it inspired. It also gave me an opportunity to have the original "voice" of the book present during the game by quoting Jules Verne on the cards.

After playing the first prototype a few times, I delivered a copy to **Victory Point Games** for early playtesting and to garner some feedback from their crack, experienced development team. The Ned Land, Professor Aronnax, and Conseil counters were added at this time, along with the four different motivations for Nemo in order to improve replayability. After playing the game some more, we tweaked the various Nemo actions and added the Incite action for Liberation.



Fortunately, we had some very good playtesters assist the development of *Nemo's War*. They played the game repeatedly and recorded their scores, which helped a great deal when it came to balancing the victory point calculations and modifiers.

### Charting the Final Course

Tim Allen added the final graphic design touches to the map once we were confident the map would not go through another major change. Many of the tables and charts were added to the map to make playing the game faster with less referencing of the rulebook. The map grew steadily over the course of development, from a single 8.5"x11" page to 11"x17" ledger size sheet, to its current oversized version (11" x 25.5").

One of the final challenges was writing the various epilogues. Each epilogue needed to fit the victory level of the player, and be consistent with the overall story and characters from the book. About as much time was spent working on the various score modifiers for each of the motivations, victory levels and epilogues as the rest of the game design. Getting the "story" part of the game just right was, literally, half the work.

I certainly hope you enjoy your voyage as Captain Nemo, no matter how long it lasts. If you have any comments or questions, I can be reached on Consimworld, BoardGameGeek (user name: anarchy) or via email at: makerofgames@gmail.com. – *Chris Taylor*