



Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea · Episode 34 / 46 · B1–B2 · 00

The Sargasso Sea

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OVERVIEW

Summary

The Sargasso Sea — chapter 34 of Jules Verne's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, told in clear English for language learners.

Transcript

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Chapter Thirty-Four — The Sargasso Sea

That day the Nautilus crossed a strange part of the Atlantic Ocean. Everyone knows about the Gulf Stream, a river of warm water in the sea. This warm current splits into two arms. The main arm goes north toward Ireland and Norway. The second arm curves south and makes a big loop.

Inside that loop lies a calm, still part of the ocean called the Sargasso Sea. It is like a lake in the middle of the Atlantic. It is covered with seaweed, so thick and heavy that a ship can hardly push through. Captain Nemo did not want the seaweed to catch in the ship's screw, so he stayed a few yards under the surface.

Why does all this seaweed gather here? Think of a bowl of water with bits of cork floating in it. If you spin the water, the cork bits all drift to the calm middle. The warm current spins around the Atlantic in the same way, and the floating things all gather in the still center.

Among the plants I saw pink sea animals with long feelers. I saw jellyfish too, colored green, red, and blue.

We spent the 22nd of February in the Sargasso Sea. The next day the ocean looked normal again. For nineteen days, from the 23rd of February to the 12th of March, the Nautilus stayed in the middle of the Atlantic. It moved fast and steady, one hundred leagues each day. I thought Captain Nemo planned to go around Cape Horn and back to the Pacific.

Ned Land had reason to worry. In this wide sea, with no islands, we could not escape. We could not fight the Captain's will. We could only wait. I hoped that one day, if we promised to keep his secret, he might set us free. But I was not sure it was safe to ask him.

Those nineteen days were quiet. I saw little of the Captain. In the library I often found his books open. He had written notes in the margins of my own book, sometimes saying my ideas were wrong. At night I sometimes heard the sad sound of his organ.

We often sailed on the surface. The sea seemed empty. A few ships passed far away, sailing toward India. One day a whaling boat chased us. The men thought the Nautilus was a giant whale worth a lot of money. Captain Nemo did not want them to waste their time, so he ended the chase by diving under the water.

On the 13th of March the Nautilus measured the depth of the sea. This work interested me very much. We had traveled about 13,000 leagues since we left the Pacific. Our position was 45 degrees south and 37 degrees west. Here other ships had let down long lines and never touched the bottom.

Then Captain Nemo took the Nautilus down in a long slope. The screw spun at full speed. The whole ship shook and sank deeper and deeper. Far below I saw dark mountain tops rising out of the black water. They might be as tall as the highest mountains on land, and still the deep went down further.

The Nautilus went lower. I felt the steel walls shake. The bolts trembled and the walls groaned. The great windows seemed to bend under the weight of the water. Only a ship as strong as this one could hold together. We reached a depth of 16,000 yards, four leagues down. The water pressed on the walls with the weight of 1,600 atmospheres.

"What a place!" I cried. "We are where no man has ever been! Look at these rocks and empty caves! Why can we not keep a picture of them?"

"Would you like to take one?" said Captain Nemo.

I was surprised. He explained that we could easily take a photograph of this deep world. A camera was brought in. Through the open window the water shone bright with electric light, with no shadows at all. In a few seconds we had a perfect picture.

"Now let us go up," said the Captain. "We must not stay too long under such pressure. Hold on tight."

Suddenly I was thrown to the floor. The blades of the screw turned upward, and the Nautilus shot toward the surface like a balloon. In four minutes it rose through four leagues of water. It leaped out of the sea like a giant fish and fell back with a great splash.

Audio, timed transcript, and companions online:

<https://alexlearns.com/english/twenty-thousand-leagues/chapter-34/>

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