



Jules Verne

Was He Prophetic?

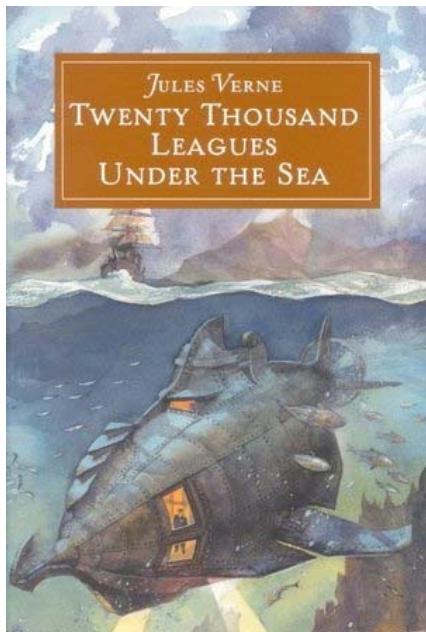
(Web resource from Pittsburgh Public Theatre, adapted for educational purposes at Olympiads School)

Some say Jules Verne was prophetic, or at least incredibly accurate in his predictions.

Fascinated as he was by science, he published many books that predicted inventions that had not been invented yet, but would be—such as the submarine, which wasn't invented until 30 years after he wrote "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea." Verne was also amazingly accurate in "From the Earth to the Moon," in which he wrote of a rocket ship that travels to the moon (over 100 years before man actually did so). In his book, the ship takes off from Florida, the launching location of modern day space shuttles, and he correctly described the velocity a spacecraft would need to escape Earth's gravity. He also describes weightlessness and in his book, the shuttle lands in the ocean when it returns to Earth. Though Verne had many ideas that never came true, his forward-thinking was impressive. Here are eight Jules Verne inventions that came true:

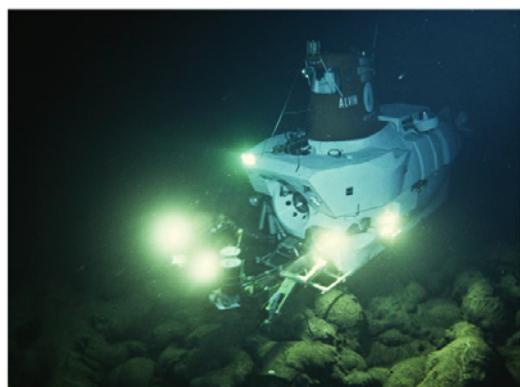
In 1863 Verne wrote a novel about Paris in the 20th century which featured glass skyscrapers, high speed trains, calculators and even a worldwide communications network. But since the protagonist of his book couldn't find happiness and came to a tragic end, his publisher refused the work and it wasn't discovered until 1989. Verne's predictions were scarily accurate.

What do you think the eight inventions are?



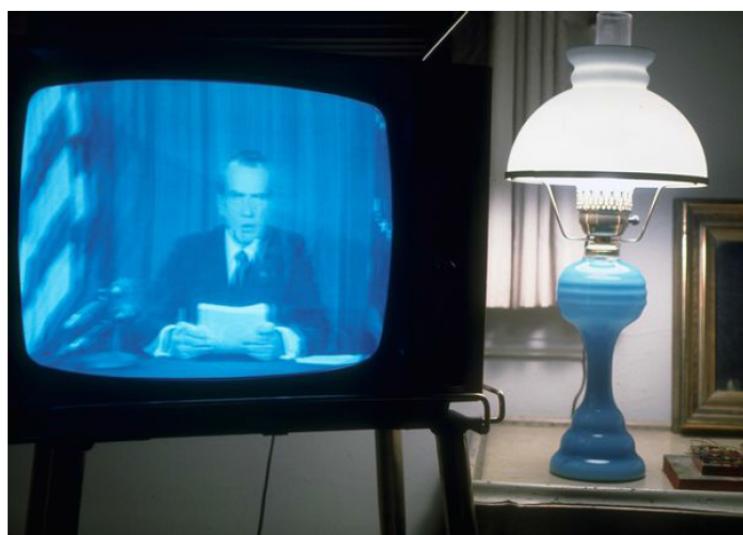
#1: Electric Submarines

Described in "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," Verne was fascinated by electricity, which at the time was nothing more than a lab experiment.

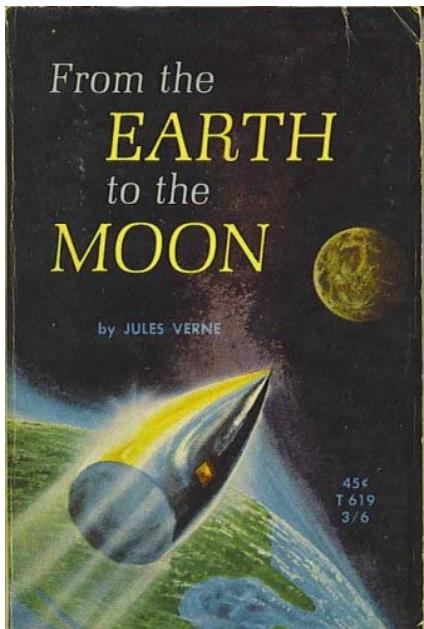


#2: Newscasts

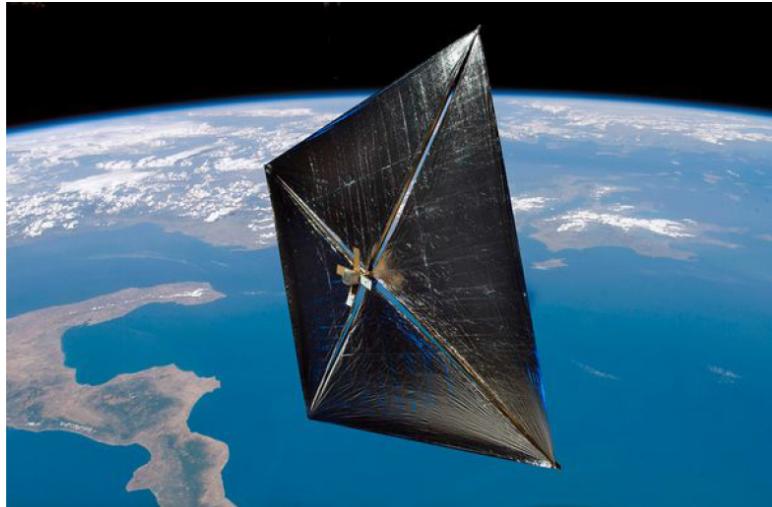
In an 1889 article, Verne described an alternate to newspapers, in which "reporters, statesmen and scientists" informed people of the news through conversation.



#3: Solar Sails

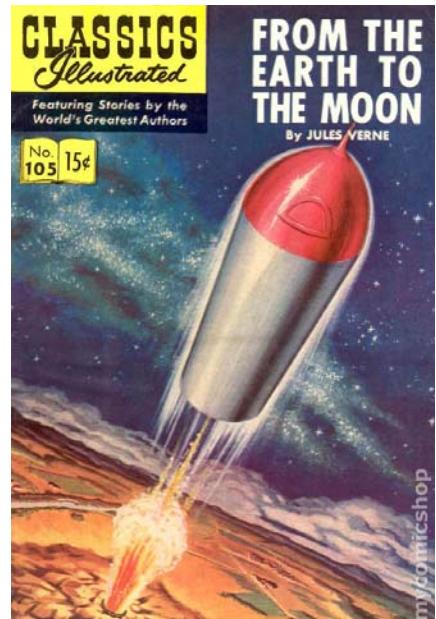


In "From the Earth to the Moon," Verne speculated about light-propelled spacecraft. Today, his ideas have a name, and are used by NASA.



#4: Lunar Modules

Verne imagined a capsule that could carry passengers to space in his novel "From the Earth to the Moon." Unlike writers such as HG Wells, Verne always grounded his ideas in material reality.



What does the phrase "grounded in material reality" mean?

#5: Skywriting

Decades before the first airplane was invented, Verne suggested the use of the sky as an advertising tool, calling it “atmospheric advertisements.” His only mistake was that he believed it would take until the year 2889 to come about.



#6: Videoconferencing

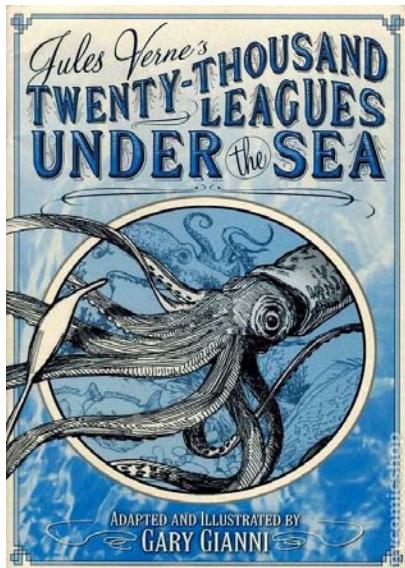
Verne described an invention he called the “phonotelephoto,” which allowed “the transmission of images by means of sensitive mirrors connected by wires,”—potentially the first reference to videophone in fiction.



What do you think is the future of videoconferencing? Will your children's children use Skype or some other technology?

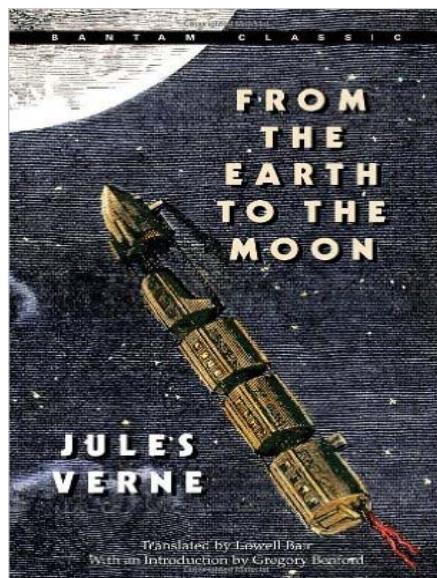
#7: Taser

In "Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea," Verne described a gun to deliver a strong electrical jolt.



#8: Splashdown Spaceship

In "From the Earth to the Moon," Verne imagined a spacecraft landing in the ocean and floating, just like this Mercury capsule.



Reflection

Have you read books or watched movies that predict technologies in the future? Do you think these predictions will come true? Share your thoughts.

