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From *Michael Strogoff* to *Tigers and Traitors* — The Extraordinary Voyages of Jules Verne in *Classics Illustrated*

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Abstract

From 1941 to 1971, the *Classics Illustrated* series of comic-book adaptations of works by Shakespeare, Hugo, Dickens, Twain, and others provided a gateway to great literature for millions of young readers. Jules Verne was the most popular author in the *Classics* catalog, with ten titles in circulation. The first of these to be adapted, *Michael Strogoff* (June 1946), was the favorite of the Russian-born series founder, Albert L. Kanter. The last to be included, *Tigers and Traitors* (May 1962), indicated how far among the *Extraordinary Voyages* the editorial selections could range. This article explores the *Classics Illustrated* pictorial abridgments of such well-known novels as *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* and *Around the World in 80 Days* and more esoteric selections such as *Off on a Comet* and *Robur the Conqueror*. Attention is given to both the adaptations and the artwork, generously represented, that first drew many readers to Jules Verne. **Click on images to view in full size.**

Résumé

De 1941 à 1971, la collection de bandes dessinées des *Classics Illustrated* (*Classiques illustrés*) offrant des adaptations d'œuvres de Shakespeare, Hugo, Dickens, Twain, et d'autres a fourni une passerelle vers la grande littérature pour des millions de jeunes lecteurs. Jules Verne a été l'auteur le plus populaire du catalogue des *Classics*, avec dix titres en circulation. Le premier publié, *Michel Strogoff* (juin 1946), était le favori du fondateur d'origine russe de la collection, Albert L. Kanter. Le dernier à être inclus, *Tigers and Traitors* (*La Maison à vapeur*, mai 1962), met en évidence l'ampleur du choix auquel se sont soumis les dirigeants de la collection en puisant les titres au sein des *Voyages extraordinaires*. Cet article met en évidence la caractéristique de condensé graphique des *Classics Illustrated* pour des romans bien connus comme *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* (*Vingt mille lieues sous les mers*) et *Around the World in 80 Days* (*Le Tour du monde en quatre-vingts jours*), sans oublier des sélections moins classiques comme *Off on a comet* (*Hector Servadac*) et *Robur le conquérant*. L'attention est portée à la fois sur les adaptations et sur les illustrations, généreusement représentées, qui ont attiré de nombreux lecteurs de Jules Verne. **Cliquer sur les images pour les voir en pleine page.**

For millions of readers in three dozen countries, [1] the imaginative realms explored by Jules Verne were first opened for discovery under the yellow banner of *Classics Illustrated*. The perennially popular French author was the most-often adapted writer in the self-proclaimed “world’s finest juvenile publication.” [2] Between 1946 and 1962, *Classics Illustrated*, a New York-based series of comics-style abridgments of “Stories by the World’s

Greatest Authors,” issued ten adaptations of novels by Jules Verne. Dumas followed with nine titles in the line, Cooper with eight, and Stevenson with seven. [3] But Verne ruled on the *CI* list.

Classics Illustrated was the brainchild of Albert Lewis Kanter (1897-1973), a Russian-born entrepreneur who deserves to be regarded as one of the great educators of the 20th century.



Fig. 1 — Albert Lewis Kanter (circa 1940) — Courtesy John Kanter

Obligated to leave high school at the age of sixteen because of his father’s poor health, he read voraciously and always carried with him an autodidact’s veneration for learning and literature. [4] In the heyday of the “Golden Age of Comics,” Kanter conceived of a means of introducing young readers to classic works of literature using the very medium that brought them their usual superhero fare. His plan was to substitute D’Artagnan, Ivanhoe, and Hawkeye for Superman, Batman, and Captain Marvel in a comic-book line that would devote each issue to the abridgment of a single literary work. [5]

So, in October 1941, Kanter launched *Classic Comics* with a sixty-four-page adaptation of *The Three Musketeers*. Soon, sequential-art treatments of other works such as *Moby Dick* (Fig. 2) and *Arabian Nights* appeared under the *Classic Comics* logo. Unlike other comic books, *Classics* were not one-shot publications. Instead, most of the 169 U.S. titles went through numerous printings, with runs between 100,000 and 250,000 copies in each printing. Eventually, more than 1,200 reprint editions would appear in the U.S. series alone, with estimated peak monthly sales of between two and four million copies. [6] Sales abroad—in editions published in the United Kingdom, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Brazil, Argentina, Mexico, Greece, Germany, Norway, Sweden, the Netherlands, France, Spain, Italy, the Phillipines, India, South Africa, and other countries—would exceed one billion. [7]

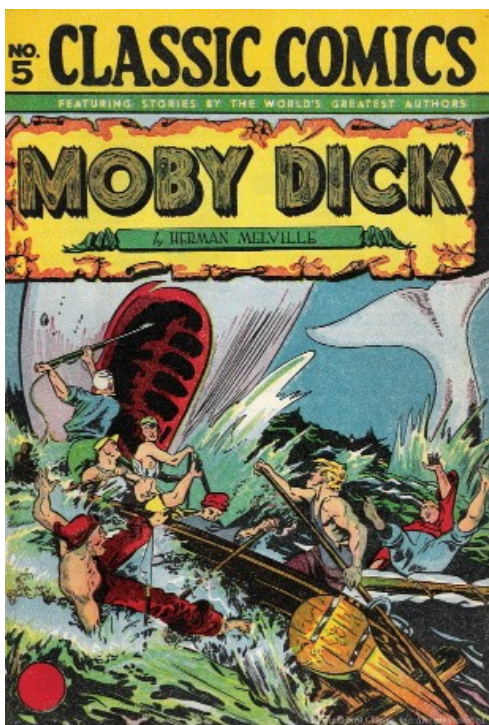


Fig. 2 — CC#005 — *Moby Dick* — Louis Zansky — 1942

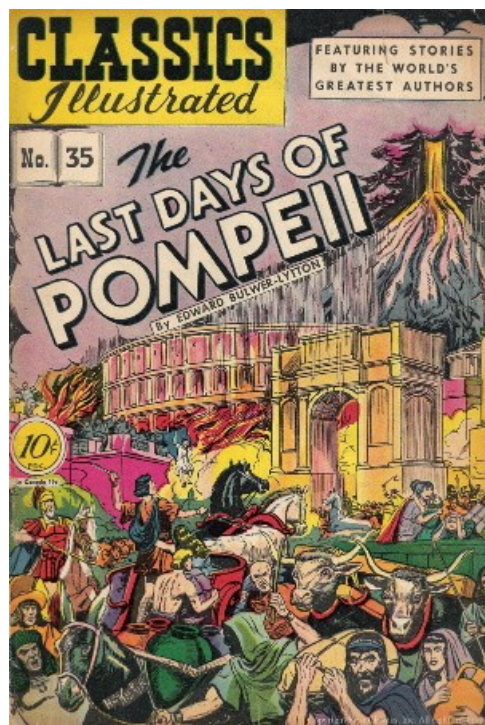


Fig. 3 — CI#035 — *Last Days Of Pompeii* — Kiefer — March 1947

Published under the Gilberton Company corporate name, the series was renamed *Classics Illustrated* in March 1947 with issue No. 35, *The Last Days of Pompeii* (Fig. 3), as part of an ongoing effort to enhance the publication's reputation with parents and teachers. [8] Despite attacks from the likes of anti-comics crusader Fredric Wertham, *Classics Illustrated* became a vital part of American popular culture. From 1941 to 1971, the series introduced GIs, bobby-soxers, and their baby-boom children to what the publisher termed "Stories by the World's Greatest Authors"—an elastic concept that embraced everything from Homer's *Iliad*, Shakespeare's *Hamlet*, and Goethe's *Faust* on the high end to such lighter fare as Sir Walter Scott's *Castle Dangerous*, Frank Buck's *Bring 'Em Back Alive*, and Emerson Hough's *The Covered Wagon* (Fig. 4). [9]

By the late 1950s, *Classics Illustrated* had become the most successful and widely distributed publication of its kind in the world, with editions printed in twenty-six languages in thirty-six countries. [10] Over the course of its thirty-year history, the Gilberton Company moved from 510 Sixth Avenue to 826 Broadway (next to the Strand bookstore) to 101 Fifth Avenue (the latter address also being home to Ballantine Books). By 1951, through the efforts of Kanter's son William, who had assumed day-to-day management of the family publication, *Classics Illustrated* was distributed nationally by the Curtis organization and was frequently found on American newsstands among copies of more "serious" periodicals such as *The Saturday Evening Post and Holiday* and apart from other comics. The original *Classics Illustrated* line dropped its page count from sixty-four to fifty-six to forty-eight, and raised its price from ten cents in 1941 to fifteen cents in 1951 to twenty-five cents in 1968. The quality of artwork and abridgments steadily improved. Beginning in April 1950 with issue No. 70, an

adaptation of James Fenimore Cooper's *The Pilot*, Albert Kanter's mission was stated clearly at the end of each issue: "Now that you have read the *Classics Illustrated* edition, don't miss the added enjoyment of reading the original, obtainable at your school or public library. (Fig. 5)" [11] The Kanter family retained control over the publication until 1967, when California businessman Patrick Frawley (sometime owner of Technicolor and American household trademarks Papermate and Schick) purchased it. [12] The Frawley Corporation made various attempts to revitalize *CI*, but changes in popular culture and the comic-book market led to the folding of the line in 1971. [13]



Fig. 4 — CI#141 — *Castle Dangerous* — Painted Cover — 1957



Fig. 5 — First "Now That You Have Read" Notice — CI#070

Surprisingly, a Verne title wasn't part of the first ten, or even twenty, *Classic Comics* issues. The *Extraordinary Voyages* weren't launched under the yellow banner until issue No. 28, in June 1946. Not so surprisingly, perhaps, the first Verne novel selected for adaptation was Russian-born Albert Kanter's favorite book, *Michael Strogoff: A Courier of the Czar*. [14] Arnold Lorne Hicks (1888–1970), who had previously provided covers and interiors for *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and *Oliver Twist*, produced heavily inked and brushed illustrations that kept the action flowing from panel to panel. Hicks was always strong in conveying character, and he was never stronger than in *Michael Strogoff*. The striking, if sanguinary, cover image featured the hero defending Nadia from attacking wolves (Fig. 6).

Pat Adam's faithful, rapidly paced adaptation contributed to an exciting fusion of words and pictures. With its depictions of knout-lashings, stabbing, and blinding, however, the story's violence made the comic book a target of critics. When the Gilberton page count shrunk from

56 to 48, a page containing a sequence of panels depicting the fate of Nicholas, who had been buried alive, was one of eight deleted (Fig. 7). *Michael Strogoff* went through a second printing in 1948 and appeared erratically on the reorder lists until a new *Classics* version sporting a painted cover showing the hero battling another animal—this time a bear—was published in January 1954 (Fig. 8). After three more printings of that edition between 1960 and 1966, a second painted cover by Norman Nodel, depicting the hero intervening to spare his mother from the knout, appeared in the summer of 1969 (Fig. 9). This new artwork was part of an attempt by the Frawley Corporation, the new owner of *Classics Illustrated* to revamp the series; the third cover variant, however, had only a single printing before Frawley shut down the line two years later.



Fig. 6 — CC#028 — *Michael Strogoff* — Line Drawing Cover — Arnold Hicks — 1946



Fig. 7 — CC#028 — *Michael Strogoff* — Page 36 — Arnold Hicks — 1946

For the second Jules Verne adaptation, the Gilberton editorial staff selected *The Mysterious Island*, and in February 1947 the title was added to the series as *Classic Comics* No. 34 (Fig. 10). It was, in fact, the last *Classic Comics* issue. The next month, the “newer, truer name” *Classics Illustrated* was introduced with No. 35. *The Mysterious Island* was the longest Verne novel adapted for the series, and scriptwriter Manning L. Stokes produced a coherent if simplified abridgment of the available corrupt translation in which Verne’s Cyrus Smith is renamed Cyrus Harding. The *Classics* version with which most readers are familiar suffers a bit in continuity from the cutting in 1949 of eight pages when the *CI* length was standardized at 48 pages.

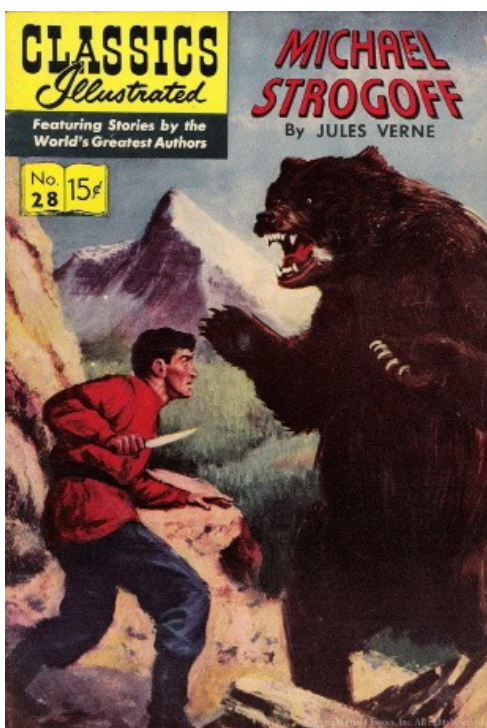


Fig. 8 — CI#028 — *Michael Strogoff* — Painted Cover
— Unidentified Artist — January 1954

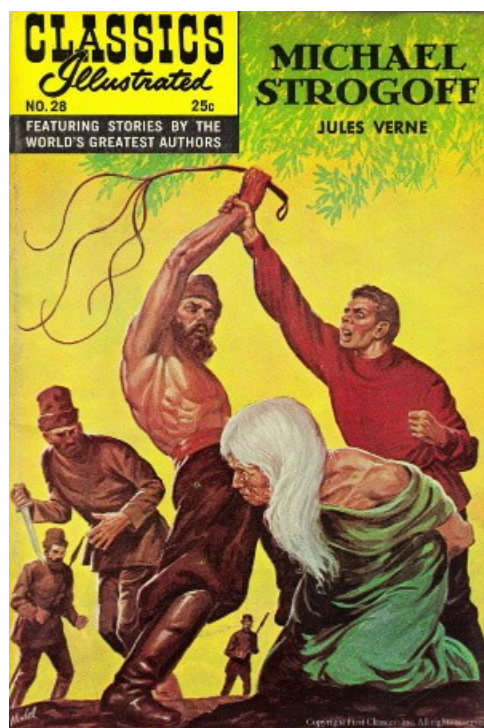


Fig. 9 — CI#028 — *Michael Strogoff* — Second
Painted Cover — Norman Nodel — 1968

The Mysterious Island was illustrated by Robert Heyward Webb, whose greatest passion was for drawing ships and boats; after leaving the comics field in later years, he turned to boat-building. Webb had illustrated *Two Years Before the Mast* and *Frankenstein* for Gilberton and later supplied editions of *Kidnapped* and *The Dark Frigate* for the series. He was assisted on *The Mysterious Island* (as he was later on *The Dark Frigate*) by inker David Heames. The pair were noted for their distinctively masculine style, and the pages of No. 34 are filled with manly men doing manly things in a quintessential “boy’s book” paradise (Fig. 11). The line-drawing cover edition was printed seven times through 1954. A painted cover by an unknown artist showing the main characters in their aerial descent was substituted in September 1957; that edition had appeared six times in print by 1968 (Fig. 12).

At precisely the same time that *Classic Comics* was becoming *Classics Illustrated*, Albert Kanter inaugurated a one-year run of Sunday newspaper supplements titled *Illustrated Classics*. Syndicated in eight papers by the *New York Post*, the series ran from 30 March 1947 to 21 March 1948 and included such titles as *The Spy*, *Tom Sawyer*, and others that would eventually be reduced from a 64-page format to become part of the 48-page comic-book series. The second title to appear as a newspaper *Illustrated Classic* was *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*, which ran from 27 April to 18 May 1947. Among the seventeen pages excised when the comic-book version appeared in May 1948 were five devoted to an onshore hunting expedition that turned into an imperialistic battle with restless natives and three that involved the death and undersea funeral rites of a member of the crew of the *Nautilus* (Fig. 13).

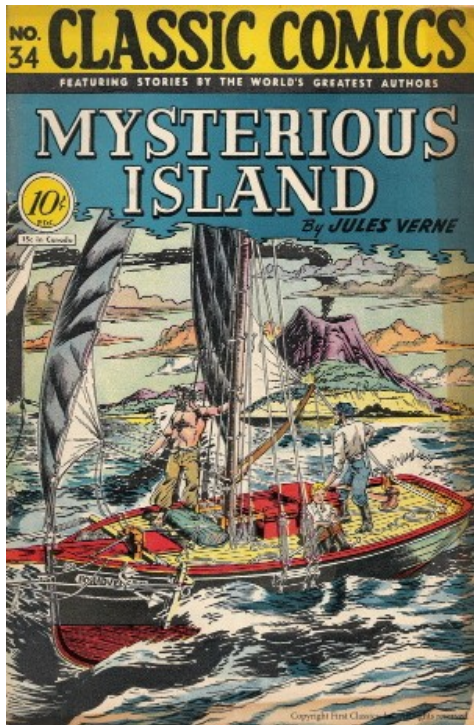


Fig. 10 — CC#34 — *Mysterious Island* — Line Drawing Cover — Robert Webb — February 1947



Fig. 11 — CC#34 — *Mysterious Island* — Page 11 — Robert Webb — David Heames — February 1947



Fig. 12 — CI#034 — *Mysterious Island* — Painted Cover — Unidentified Artist — September 1957



Fig. 13 — *Illustrated Classic* in Newspaper Edition — *Twenty Thousand Leagues* — Henry Kiefer — 4 May 1947

The artist contracted to illustrate what would become *Classics Illustrated* No. 47 was Henry C. Kiefer (1890–1957), a legendary figure in comics lore and one of two dominant house artists at Gilberton in the late 1940s and early 1950s. Older than most comics artists of the time, Kiefer had been educated in Paris, had a flair for the dramatic, and infused his work with what might be called a willful antiquity. He excelled in atmosphere, particularly of the Victorian variety. Indeed, one might call him the original Steampunk artist. In *Twenty Thousand Leagues*, Kiefer, sometimes criticized for his occasional woodenness, packed the adaptation with rousing action sequences of submarine attacks, octopi (alas, rather than squid) infestation, and shark menace (Fig. 14). His theatricality shines through in his characterization of Nemo with his glowering expression and sharply pointed beard. The artist may have seen the 19th-century Riou illustrations; in any case, his Ned Land somewhat resembles the hirsute original.

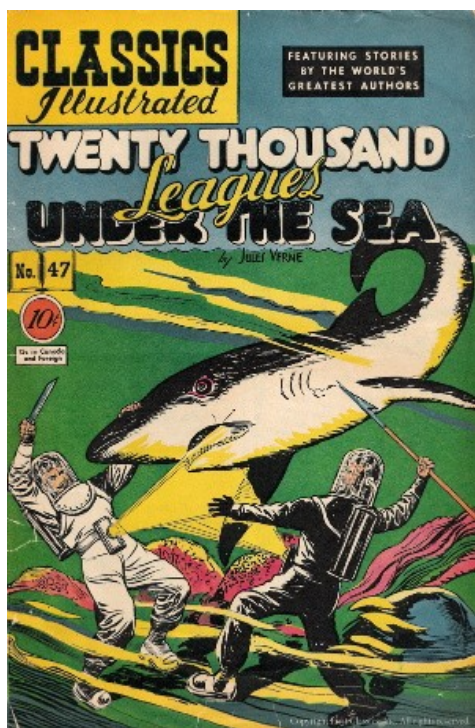


Fig. 14 — CI#047 — *Twenty Thousand Leagues* — Line Drawing Cover — Henry Kiefer — May 1947



Fig. 15 — CI#047 — *Twenty Thousand Leagues* — First Painted Cover — Unidentified Artist — September 1955

In September 1955, Gilberton introduced a painted cover for No. 47 showing a beardless Ned threatened by a shark against an undersea green background that replaced Kiefer's original line-drawing design, which had seen five printings. The enormously popular edition was printed ten times and the remains one of the most instantly recognizable of *Classics Illustrated* images (Fig. 15). In 1968, under the Frawley-era mandate to replace even tried-and-true Gilberton covers, Norman Nodel produced a second painted cover that featured the principal characters undersea in their diving suits. The artist took care to make Nemo, Aronnax, and Ned (not to mention the *Nautilus*) resemble Kiefer's drawings; he also

continued the tradition of the green backdrop (Fig. 16). This Frawley edition was reprinted in the spring of 1970. With a total of seventeen printings, *Twenty Thousand Leagues* was the most widely distributed Verne title in the original *Classics Illustrated* line.

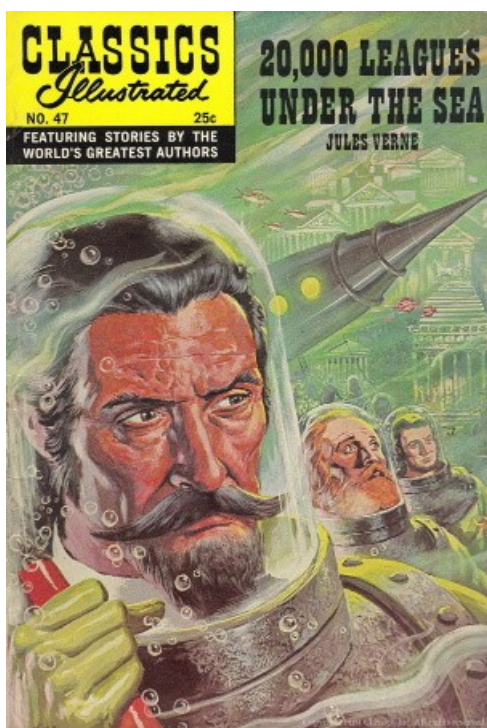


Fig. 16 — CI#047 — *Twenty Thousand Leagues* — Second Painted Cover — Norman Nodel — 1968

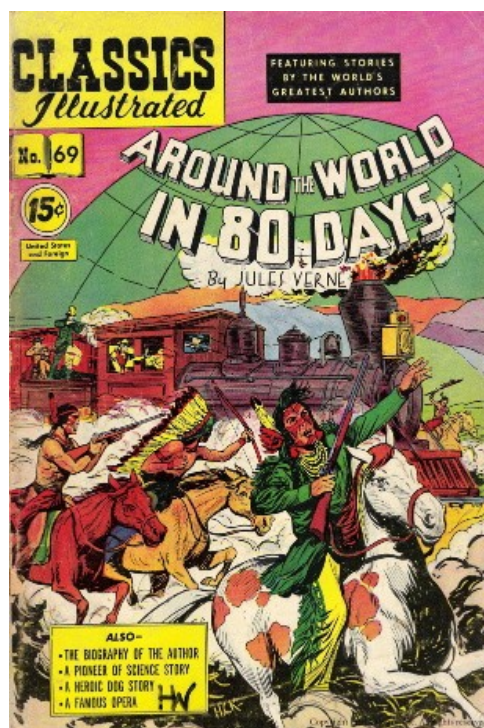


Fig. 17 — CI#069 — *Around the World in 80 Days* — Line Drawing Cover — Henry Kiefer — March 1950 (March 1955 reprint)

Next in popularity among readers of the series was *Around the World in Eighty Days*, published in March 1950 (Fig. 17). It was the first Verne CI to have been scripted for the 48-page Gilberton format, and the pacing and continuity were vastly improved. Henry C. Kiefer once more supplied the illustrations. In *Around the World*, the artist presents Phileas Fogg as the very model of a firm-jawed Anglo-Saxon hero (Fig. 18). Passepartout and Fix inhabit the realm of caricature, while Aouda resembles most of Kiefer's other heroines—in more exotic attire. In January 1957, just in time to catch the wave of popularity of the David Niven-Cantinflas film, Gilberton released a painted-cover edition (Fig. 19). Where the original-cover version went through three printings between 1950 and 1955, the painted-cover edition was printed nine times by the spring of 1969, for a total of twelve printings.

The second of the two lead Gilberton artists of the late 1940s and early 1950s was Alex A. Blum (1889–1969), a Hungarian-born etcher by training, who illustrated the interior and painted the cover for No. 105, *From the Earth to the Moon*, published in March 1953 (Fig. 20). His linework is almost the antithesis of Kiefer's, yet both share an Old World sensibility that translated well into the mid-period *Classics Illustrated* house style. Blum's lighter touch seemed ideally suited for the occasionally humorous tone of *From the Earth to the Moon*. The scriptwriter, who combined *From the Earth to the Moon* and *Round the Moon* for the

adaptation, captured something of Verne's wit and satirical style, for which Blum found visual equivalents in the portraits and antics of the unlikely space-voyage companions (Fig. 21). No variant covers were produced for No. 105, which, with twelve printings, tied for second place with No. 69 in popularity among Verne *Classics* titles. It also went through more printings than any other *CI* issue numbered 100 or above.



Fig. 18 — CI#069 — *Around the World in 80 Days* — Page 05 — Henry Kiefer — March 1950

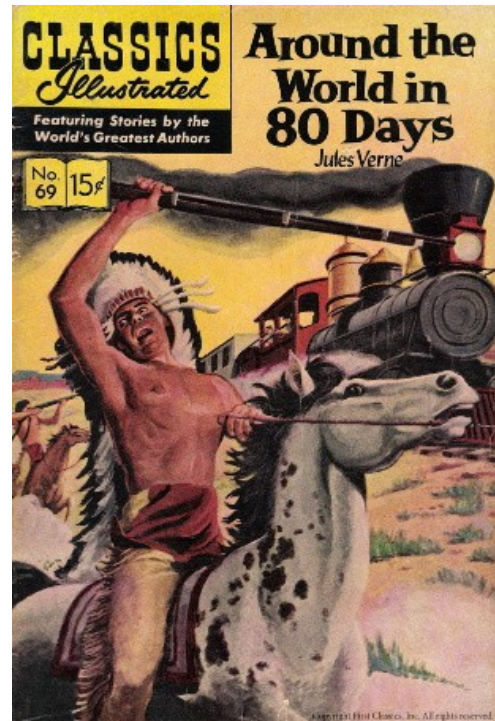


Fig. 19 — CI#069 — *Around the World in 80 Days* — Painted Cover — Unidentified Artist — January 1957

Four years passed before another Verne novel was added to the *Classics* list. No. 138, *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*, was issued in May 1957. It boasted one of the most arresting covers in the history of the series, a depiction—by Norman B. Saunders (1907–1989), famed for his paintings for the 1962 *Topps Mars Attacks* trading-card series—of the mortal struggle between an Ichthyosaurus and a Plesiosaurus in the underground sea (Fig. 22). Prolific *CI* artist Norman Nodel received the interior-art assignment for No. 138. The artist, who was later to produce a triumph of atmospheric shading in *The Invisible Man*, brought his skills to bear in the sequence of panels depicting Axel's horror on realizing that he is lost (Fig. 23). Nodel also played with the by-now uniform Gilberton panel shapes, elongating them at times to heighten the sense of constricting circumstances and impending doom. It should be noted that the script got the names of the characters right—Professor Lidenbrock rather than “Hardwigg” leads the expedition. The artist's conception of Lidenbrock is a visual echo of Verne's description, down to the long thin nose resembling a knife blade. *Journey* went through eight printings by 1968.

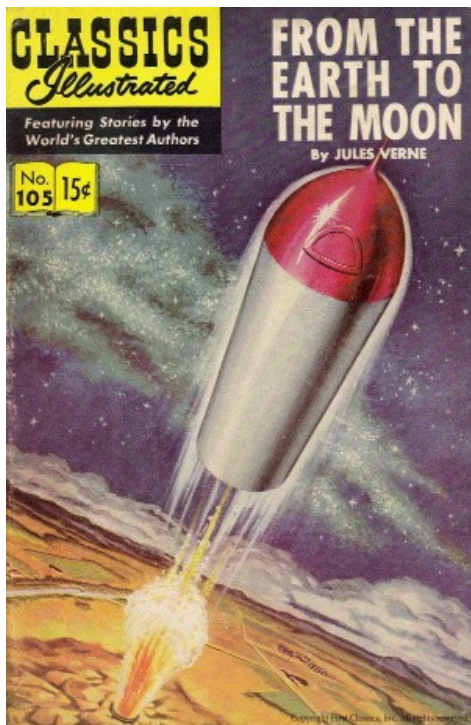


Fig. 20 — CI#105 — *From the Earth to the Moon* — Painted Cover — Alex Blum — March 1953



Fig. 21 — CI#105 — *From the Earth to the Moon* — Page 32 — Alex Blum — March 1953

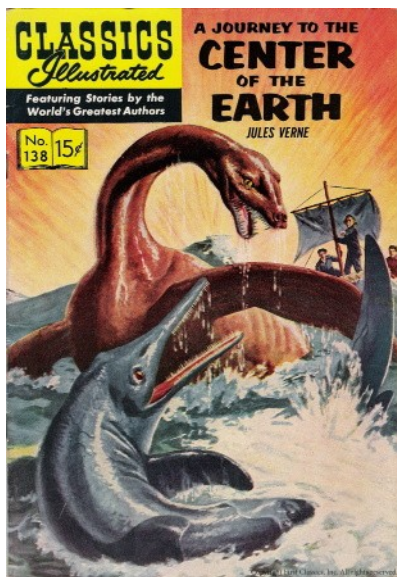


Fig. 22 — CI#138 — *Journey to the Center of the Earth* — Painted Cover — Norman Saunders — May 1957



Fig. 23 — CI#138 — *Journey to the Center of the Earth* — Page 13 — Norman Nodel — May 1957

Possibly the best-known cover in the history of *Classics Illustrated* appeared in March 1959 with the publication of No. 149, *Off On a Comet*, an alternate English title for *Hector Servadac* (Fig. 24). Millions who never read the issue were aware of it because for ten years, between

1959 and 1969, the dramatic painted cover (actually a line-drawing reproduction) graced the back-cover reorder list on every *CI* issue as the emblematic icon (Fig. 25). Children’s book illustrator Gerald McCann, also known for *Classics Illustrated* cover paintings for *The Conspirators* and *The Food of the Gods*, brought his dry-brush technique to *Off On a Comet*, creating a distinctive visual style for the comic book.



Fig. 24 — CI#149 — *Off on a Comet* — Painted Cover — Unidentified Artist — March 1959

Fig. 25 — *Classics Illustrated* Reorderlist — January 1960 — Showing *Off on a Comet* icon

The adaptation retained some of the humor of Verne’s novel, particularly in the relationships between Servadac and his orderly Ben Zoof and Servadac and his old astronomy teacher, Palmyrin Rosette (Fig. 26). The concluding panel, referring to the aborted duel between Servadac and the Russian Count Timascheff, mirrors the first panel and neatly ties up the tale. The unknown scriptwriter reduced the problematic character of Hakhabut to an offstage role in a single matter-of-fact reference. After six printings, the original cover was inexplicably dropped in the fall of 1968 by the Frawley Corporation in favor of new, more restrained artwork by Edward Moritz (Fig. 27). Curiously, the back cover of that single-printing edition displayed the first *Off On a Comet* painted cover, making it something of an instant collector's item. The original cover remained the standard worldwide, as a later Greek *Klassika Eikonographimena* edition demonstrated (Fig. 28).

Responding to the May 1961 release of William Witney’s film version of *Master of the World*, starring Vincent Price, Gilberton took the unprecedented step of issuing in sequence two related titles by the same author. [15] In that month, an adaptation by Al Sundel of *Robur the Conqueror*, *Classics Illustrated* No. 162, was published with a lively painted cover by Casey Jones (Fig. 29). Artist Don Perlin’s illustrations deftly capture the story’s mixture of

whimsy and madness, while Sundel's script avoids any of the aspects of the story that have been criticized as culturally insensitive (Fig. 30). The U.S. edition was printed a second time in 1964 and again in 1967. Three decades later, in 1991, the publisher of the reestablished German *Illustrierte Klassiker* series selected *Robur der Sieger* as issue No. 1—a testament at once to the international popularity of Verne and the whimsical appeal of this lesser-known work (Fig. 31).



Fig. 26 — CI#149 — *Off on a Comet* — Page 29 — Gerald McCann — March 1959



Fig. 27 — CI#149 — *Off on a Comet* — Second Painted Cover — Edward Moritz — Fall 1968

In 1961, Gilberton suddenly replaced its art director L.B. Cole with a champion of minimalism, Sidney Miller, who immediately set about tweaking the *Classics* exteriors and interiors. When *Robur the Conqueror* was published in May, a final form had still not been adopted, so in the “Coming Next” notice on the inside front cover of *Robur*, a panel by Don Perlin from the current comic book was shown as the cover of the forthcoming title (Fig. 32).

When *Master of the World* was issued in July 1961, both the abandonment of the familiar open-book device and the stark image of the Terror struck by a lightning bolt seemed rather symbolic of the impact of Miller's artistic vision for the future of *Classics Illustrated* (Fig. 33). Gray Morrow brought a dark, brooding quality to his illustrations for the Verne title. He exploited the drama of the machinery and succeeded in making the Terror a character in its own right. Morrow's *Robur*, the “master of the world” himself, though based for continuity's sake on Don Perlin's renderings in No. 162, surpasses its model in monomaniacal grandeur (Fig. 34). Like its immediate predecessor, *Master of the World* went through three printings, from 1961 to 1968.



Fig. 28 — *Klassika Eikonographimena* #1077 — Off on a Comet



Fig. 29 — CI#162 — *Robur the Conqueror* — Painted Cover — Casey Jones — May 1961



Fig. 30 — CI#162 — *Robur the Conqueror* — Page 13 — Don Perlin — May 1961



Fig. 31 — IK#01 — *Robur der Sieger* — German — 1991



Fig. 32 — CI#162 — “Coming Next” Notice — Don Perlin — May 1962



Fig. 33 — CI#163 — *Master of the World* — Painted Cover — Unidentified Artist — July 1961



Fig. 34 — CI#163 — *Master of the World* — Page 39 — Gray Morrow — July 1961

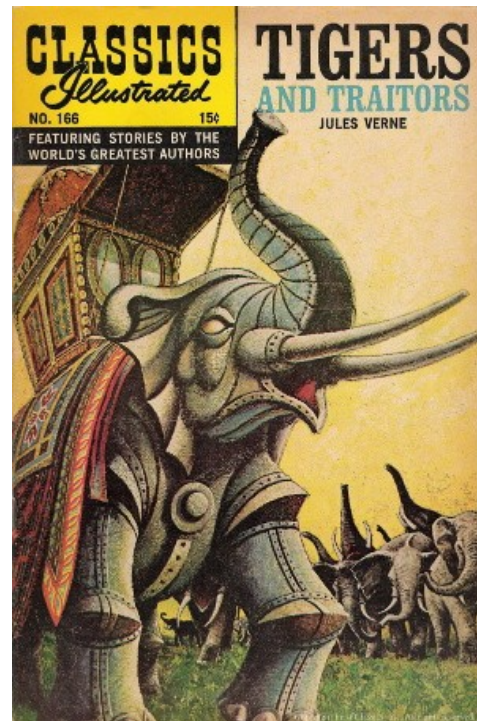


Fig. 35 — CI#166 — *Tigers and Traitors* — Painted Cover — Unidentified Artist — May 1962



Fig. 36 — CI#166 — *Tigers and Traitors* — Page 37 — Norman Nodel — May 1962



Fig. 37 — *Darkhorse Classics* — *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea* — Gary Gianni — 1992

By 1962, the Gilberton publication cycle was in disarray, and the end of original-title production was in sight. Norman Nodel, already committed to a last-hurrah edition of Goethe's *Faust*, was called in to illustrate Al Sundel's faithful script of Verne's *Tigers and Traitors*, the second part of *The Steam House*, issued in May 1962 as *Classics Illustrated* No. 166 (Fig. 35). The artist, whose earlier work for Gilberton had been richly detailed, bowed to the prevailing Milleresque house style and provided often sketchy backgrounds filled in by the colorist. Still, Nodel's characters, such as Colonel Munro and his long-lost wife, were vividly rendered (Fig. 36). *Tigers and Traitors* was printed three times between 1962 and 1966. The first printing is among the most collectible of later *CI* editions.

In 1990, First Publishing, a Chicago comics company, revived *Classics Illustrated* under license from the Frawley Corporation, which had acquired the series from Albert Kanter in 1967. First created a new logo and produced an ambitious collection of titles with completely new artwork by Gahan Wilson, Rick Geary and others; new, scrupulously accurate adaptations; and, in some instances, stories that were new to *CI*, such as H.G. Wells's *The Island of Dr. Moreau*. Sadly, the First project expired in June 1991 after the 27th issue, the victim of a changed commercial and cultural climate.

One of the titles already completed and scheduled for publication, but then dropped, was *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea*. Illustrated and adapted by Gary Gianni, who had supplied for the First Publishing *CI* series a beautiful rendering of several O. Henry stories, the Verne novel never looked better. The artist packed the 44 pages with drawings that reflect the influence of such masters of the Golden Age of book illustration as Franklin Booth and Joseph Clement Coll. Gianni also adapted the novel and restored the first-person narrative,

which had been ignored in the 1947 *CI* script. Fortunately, Gianni retained his copyright in the original art and, when the First Classics line folded, was able to arrange for the book's publication by Dark Horse in 1992. The pages had not been colored, so the artist's period-piece linework was all the more prominent (Fig. 37).

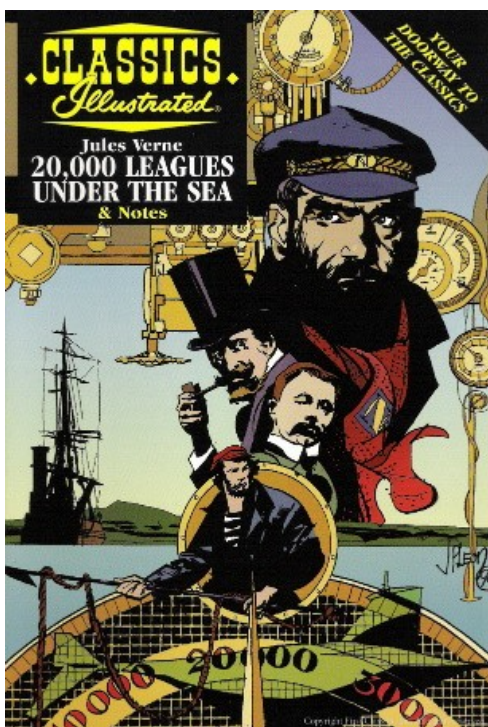


Fig. 38 — SG23 — *Twenty Thousand Leagues* — Acclaim Study Guide — John Paul Leon — July 1997

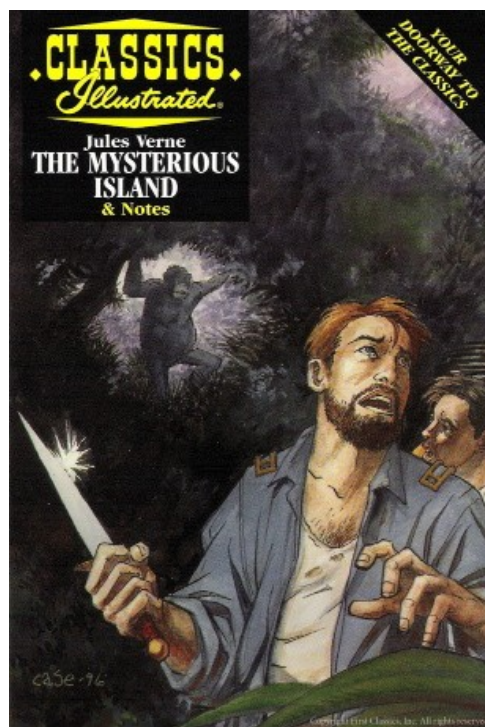


Fig. 39 — SG24 — *The Mysterious Island* — Acclaim Study Guide — Richard Case — July 1997

Other *Classics Illustrated* revivals have followed. Acclaim Comics inaugurated *Classics Illustrated Study Guides*, digest-size reproductions of the original Gilberton series, in 1997, edited by Madeleine Robins. In July of that year, Acclaim issued four Verne titles simultaneously: SG23, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (cover by John Paul Leon, notes by Beth Nachison) (Fig. 38); SG24, *The Mysterious Island* (cover by Richard Case, essay by Beth Nachison) (Fig. 39); SG25, *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* (cover by Lou Harrison, notes by Howard Hendrix) (Fig. 40); and SG26, *From the Earth to the Moon* (notes by Gregory Feeley) (Fig. 41). A fifth Verne book, SG55, *Around the World in Eighty Days* (cover by Lou Harrison, notes by Beth Nachison) (Fig. 42), was added in January 1998. Each title featured new cover artwork, but the interiors were unchanged.

Acclaim added critical essays, often by specialists, that were uniformly outstanding in their depth and comprehensiveness. The publisher attempted to market the compact *Classics* as educational tools. Booksellers, however, didn't know how to categorize them, while comic-book stores didn't know what to make of them. Bookstore chain Barnes and Noble, in particular, wavered between placing them in the literature or graphic-novels sections. [16]. Unfairly dismissed by some as glorified *Cliffs Notes*—an American reference series notorious for its superficiality—the *Acclaim Study Guides* achieved a unique cultural identity through the

very critical essays that so confused retailers. But it was not enough to save the series. After sixty-two issues, the Acclaim experiment ended in April 1998.

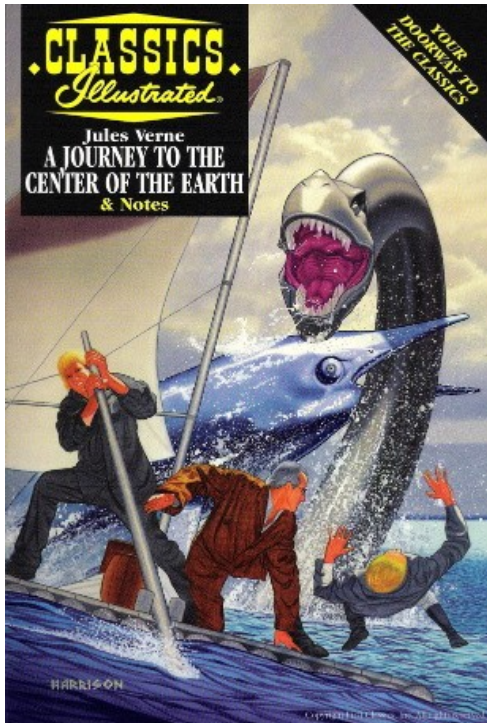


Fig. 40 — SG25 — *Journey to the Center of the Earth* — Acclaim Study Guide — Lou Harrison — July 1997

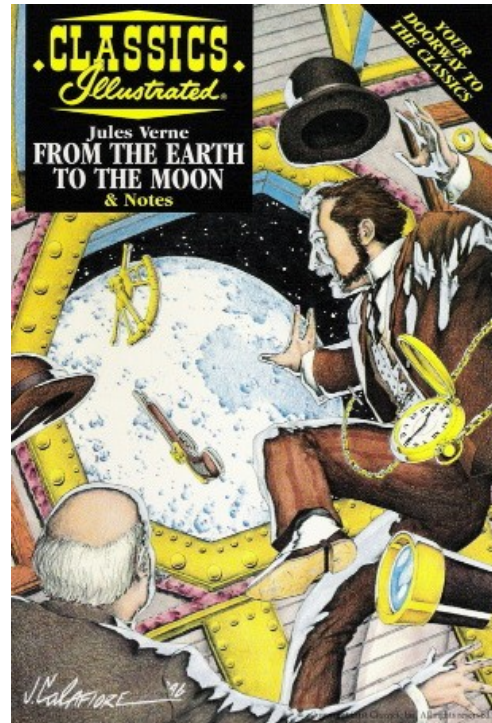


Fig. 41 — SG26 — *From the Earth to the Moon* — Acclaim Study Guide — Jim Calafiore — July 1997

With access to a number of original Gilberton cover paintings and proof pages, Jack Lake Productions of Toronto resurrected *Classics Illustrated* in 2003. Two Verne titles were reissued in 2008: No. 47, *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (using the first painted cover) and No. 138, *A Journey to the Center of the Earth*. A revived British line, published by Jeff and Jon Brooks under Jack Lake auspices, was launched in 2008, with *A Journey to the Centre of the Earth* offered as the sixth title in 2009 (Fig. 43). Meanwhile, Flesk Publications reissued a large-format hardcover edition of Gary Gianni's *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* in 2009. The handsome interior art was subtly colored by Jim and Ruth Keegan; the adaptation was introduced by Ray Bradbury (Fig. 44). [17]

For the seventieth anniversary of the series, Jack Lake Productions reissued the 1950 Kiefer *Around the World in 80 Days*, which featured a high-resolution reproduction of the original 1957 cover painting (Fig. 45). Simultaneously, Papercutz, a New-York graphic-novel publisher, brought out a 144-page anniversary edition of the same work, with an adaptation by a French team, scriptwriter Loic Dauvillier and artist Aude Soleil. This visually engaged Papercutz edition, more in the European Hergé-style (Tintin) comic-book vein than the Gilberton mid-20th century realist mode, gave ample scope to the antics of Passepartout (fig. 46).

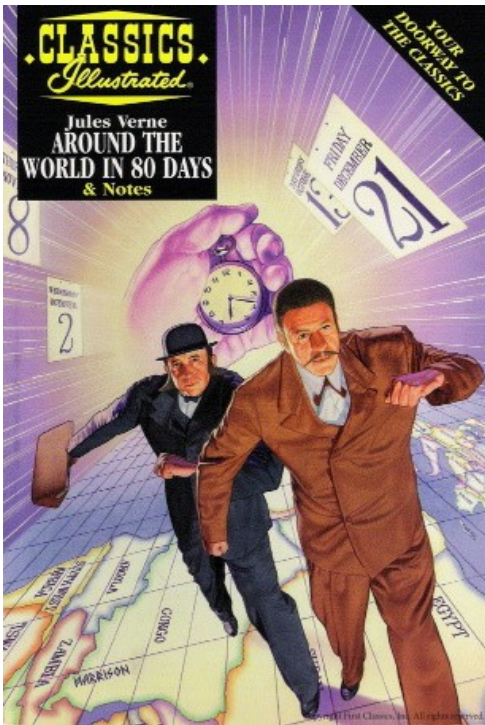


Fig. 42 — SG55 — *Around the World in 80 Days* — Aclain Study Guide — Lou Harrison — January 1998

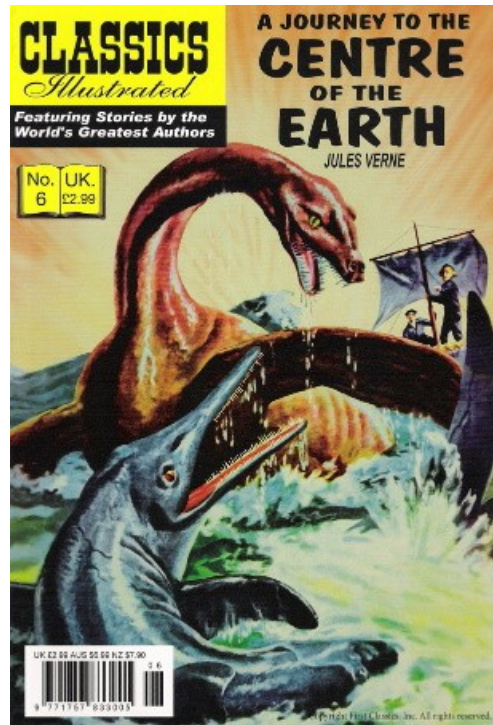


Fig. 43 — UKCI#006 — *Journey to the Centre of The Earth* — British Cover — Norman Saunders — 2009



Fig. 44 — JLCI#047 — *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* — 2008

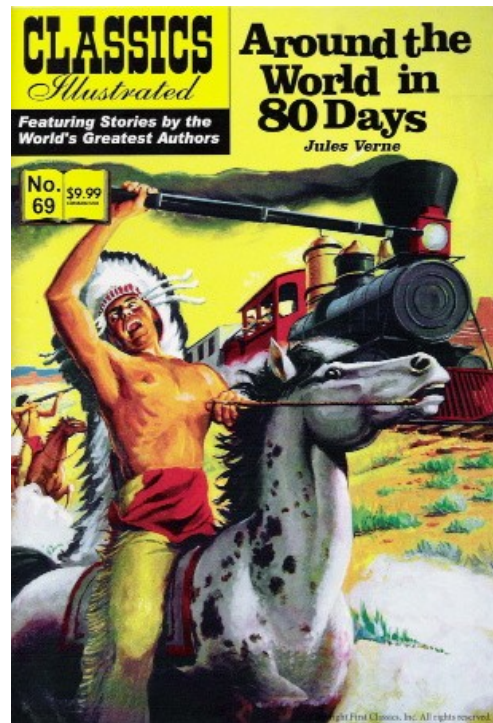


Fig. 45 — JLCI#69 — *Around the World in 80 Days* — 2008

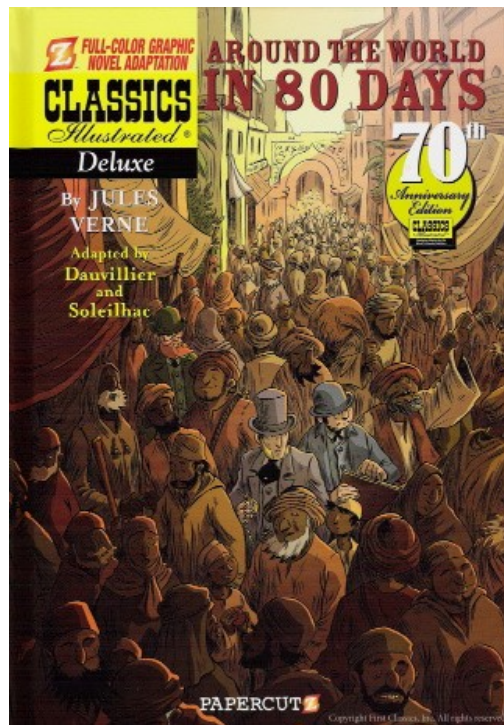


Fig. 46 — Papercutz — *Around the World in 80 Days*

And thus, one might say, the *Extraordinary Voyages* of Jules Verne in *Classics Illustrated* have found in their end their beginning, with two of the most popular editions—as well as the almost-*Classic* that is arguably the best of them all—in print again. Just as more than a half-century ago one generation began its journey to the center of the earth and first traveled 20,000 leagues under the aegis of the bright yellow banner, the same opportunity now awaits the Nadias and Herberts and Ninas and Axels of the twenty-first century.

Note

All artwork, with the exception of the 1940 photograph of Albert L. Kanter and the Dark Horse and Flesk illustrations, are copyrighted: © 2011 First Classics, Inc. All rights reserved. By permission of Jack Lake Productions, Inc.

APPENDIX**A PRINTING HISTORY OF JULES VERNE TITLES IN CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED [18]**

CC = Classic Comics; **CI** = Classics Illustrated; **LDC** = line-drawing cover; **PC** = painted cover; **HRN** = highest reorder number, which indicates date of issue; **SG** = Study Guide (Acclaim)

CLASSIC COMICS / CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED, First Series (Gilberton Co., Inc., 1941–1967; Frawley Corp., 1967–1971)

28. *Michael Strogoff* by Jules Verne. Line-drawing cover (Michael fighting wolves) and interior art by Arnold L. Hicks, adaptation by Pat Adam; Verne biography; “Chaplains Courageous”; “Come On, Balto! Come On, Good Dog!” “Coming Next” illus. by Arnold L. Hicks. First and only CC LDC printing June 1946 [no HRN, 56 pages, 10¢]. One CI LDC printing September 1948 [HRN 51, 48 pages]. First painted cover (Michael facing bear) unattributed, original interior art; first CI PC1 printing January 1954 [HRN 115, 15¢]; subsequent CI PC1 printings March 1960 [HRN 155], November 1963 [HRN 167], July 1966 [HRN 167]. Second painted cover (flogging of Marfa Strogoff) by Norman Nodel, original interior art. First and only CI PC2 printing Summer 1969 [HRN 169, stiff cover, 25¢]. Seven printings (one CC LDC, one CI LDC, four PC1, one PC2).

34. *Mysterious Island* by Jules Verne. Line-drawing cover (boat) and interior art by Robert H. Webb and David Heames, adaptation by Manning Stokes; Verne biography; American Indians: “The Siouan (Sioux) Family”; Pioneers of Science: “Charles Proteus Steinmetz, The Wizard of Electricity”; “Coming Next” illus. by Henry C. Kiefer. Last Classic Comics issue. First and only CC LDC printing February 1947 [HRN 35, 56 pages, 10¢]; First CI LDC printing April-June 1949 [HRN 60, 48 pages]; subsequent CI LDC printings August 1949 [HRN 62, 48 pages], May 1950 [HRN 71], December 1950 [HRN 78, 15¢], February 1952 [HRN 92], March 1954 [HRN 117]. Painted cover (balloon) unattributed, original interior art; first CI PC printing September 1957 [HRN 140, 15¢]; subsequent CI LDC printings May 1960 [HRN 156], October 1963 [HRN 167], May 1964 [HRN 167], June 1966 [HRN 167], 1968 [HRN 166, 25¢]. Thirteen printings (one CC LDC, six CI LDC, six CI PC).

47. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne. Line-drawing cover (undersea battle with shark) and interior art by Henry C. Kiefer; Verne biography; Dog Heroes: “Hero Rex”; American Indians: “The Hurons”; Pioneers of Science: “Luther Burbank, ‘The World’s Greatest Naturalist’”; “Coming Next” illus. by Henry C. Kiefer. Originally appeared as newspaper Illustrated Classic, 27 April–18 May 1947. First LDC printing May 1948 [HRN 47, 48 pages, 10¢]; subsequent LDC printings October 1949 [HRN 64], December 1950 [HRN 78, 15¢], April 1952 [HRN 94], April 1954 [HRN 118]. First painted cover (Ned Land and shark) unattributed, original interior art. First PC1 printing September 1955 [HRN 128, 15¢]; subsequent PC1 printings June 1956 [HRN 133], September 1957 [HRN 140], January 1959 [HRN 148], May 1960 [HRN 156], 1962 [HRN 165], Spring-Summer 1963 [HRN 167], March 1964 [HRN 167], August 1965 [HRN 167], October 1966 [HRN 167]. Second painted cover

(Nemo in foreground) by Norman Nodel, original interior art; first PC2 printing 1968 [HRN 166, 25¢]; second PC2 printing Spring 1970 [HRN 169, stiff cover]. Seventeen printings (five LDC, ten PC1, two PC2).

69. *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne. Line-drawing cover (Indians attacking train) and interior art by Henry C. Kiefer; Verne biography; Famous Operas: “Der Meistersinger” by Richard Wagner [synopsis by Eleanor Lidofsky]; Dog Heroes: “Smoky, The Quick Thinking Dog”; Pioneers of Science: “Thomas Wedgwood, Inventor of the Camera”; “Coming Next” illus. by Alex A. Blum. First LDC printing March 1950 [HRN 70, 48 pages, 10¢]; subsequent LDC printings September 1951 [HRN 87, 15¢], March 1955 [HRN 125]. Painted cover (Indians attacking train) unattributed, original interior art. First PC printing January 1957 [HRN 136, 15¢], September 1958 [HRN 146], September 1959 [HRN 152], Fall 1961 [HRN 164], Spring-Summer 1963 [HRN 167], July 1964 [HRN 167], November 1965 [HRN 167], July 1967 [HRN 166], Spring 1969 [HRN 169, stiff cover, 25¢]. Twelve printings (three LDC, nine PC printings).

105. *From the Earth to the Moon* by Jules Verne. Painted cover (blast-off) and interior art by Alex A. Blum; Verne biography (Alex A. Blum); American Presidents: “An Incident in the Life of Andrew Johnson” (Alex A. Blum); Great Lives: “Ponce de Leon and the Fountain of Youth” (Alex A. Blum); Stories of Early America: “The Oklahoma Land Run” (Alex A. Blum); “Coming Next” illus. by Alex A. Blum. First PC printing March 1953 [HRN 106, 48 pages, 15¢]; subsequent PC printings April 1954 [HRN 118], May 1956 [HRN 132], November 1957 [HRN 141], September 1958 [HRN 146], May 1960 [HRN 156], Spring-Summer 1963 [HRN 167], May 1964 [HRN 167], May 1965 [HRN 167], October 1967 (two variants, one with inserted Grit ad) [HRN 166], Summer 1969 [HRN 169, stiff cover, 25¢], Spring 1971 [HRN 169, stiff cover]. Twelve printings.

138. *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* by Jules Verne. Painted cover (mortal combat between Ichthyosaurus and Plesiosaurus) by Norman B. Saunders, interior art by Norman Nodel; Verne biography (Alex A. Blum); “The Story of Great Britain, Part 12: Great Britain Today” (Lou Cameron); “Cave Exploring [spelunking]” (no illus.); “Coming Next” illus. (cover variant) by Alex A. Blum. First PC printing May 1957 [HRN 136, 48 pages, 15¢]; subsequent PC printings September 1958 [HRN 146], May 1960 [HRN 156], Fall 1960 [HRN 158], Spring-Summer 1963 [HRN 167], June 1964 [HRN 167], April 1966 [HRN 167], 1968 [HRN 166, 25¢]. Eight printings.

149. *Off On a Comet* by Jules Verne. First painted cover (man gripping rocky surface, black background) unattributed, interior art by Gerald McCann; Verne biography; “The Dwarf and the Giant [Mercury and Jupiter]”; “Heavenly Heroes [Callisto, Orion, Pleiades, Ariadne]”; “Coming Next” illus. by Alex A. Blum. First PC1 printing March 1959 [HRN 149, 48 pages, 15¢]; subsequent PC1 printings March 1960 [HRN 155], Summer-Fall 1961 [anomalous white-background HRN 149], December 1963 [HRN 167], February 1965 [HRN 167], October 1966 [HRN 167]. Second painted cover (characters in balloon, yellow background) by Edward Moritz, original interior art. One PC2 printing Fall 1968 [HRN 166, soft cover, 25¢]. Seven printings (six PC1, one PC2).

162. *Robur the Conqueror* by Jules Verne. Painted cover (Albatross above train) by Casey Jones (final issue with number and price in open-book device); interior art by Don Perlin, adaptation by Alfred Sundel; Verne biography; “Who Knows?” (Part I) by Guy de

Maupassant; “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky” (Part I) by Stephen Crane; Men of Action: “Joshua,” art by Sidney Miller (?); “Coming Next” illus. (cover variant showing lower-right panel, p. 34, No. 162) by Don Perlin. First PC printing May 1961 [HRN 162, 48 pages, 15¢]; subsequent PC printings July 1964 [HRN 167], August 1967 [HRN 166]. Three printings.

163. *Master of the World* by Jules Verne. Painted cover (Terror struck by lightening) unattributed (first issue with number and price in yellow rectangle); interior art by Gray Morrow; adaptation by Alfred Sundel; Verne biography; “Who Knows?” (Part II) by Guy de Maupassant; “The Bride Comes to Yellow Sky” (Part II) by Stephen Crane; Men of Action: “Socrates,” art by Sidney Miller (?); “Coming Next” illus. unattributed. First PC printing July 1961 [HRN 163, 48 pages, 15¢]; subsequent printings January 1965 [HRN 167], 1968 [HRN 166, 25¢]. Three printings.

166. *Tigers and Traitors* (the second part of *The Steam House*, a work that also contains *The Demon of Cawnpore*) by Jules Verne. Painted cover (mechanical elephant) unattributed, interior art by Norman Nodel, adaptation by Alfred Sundel; Verne biography; “Who Knows?” (Part V) by Guy de Maupassant; “The Sepoy Revolt”; Men of Action: “Frederick Barbarossa,” art by Norman Nodel; “Coming Next” illus. (cover variant) by Norman Nodel. First PC printing May 1962 [HRN 165, 48 pages, 15¢]; subsequent PC printings February 1964 [HRN 167], November 1966 [HRN 167]. Three printings. (On a 1961 reorder list showing planned titles, *Tigers and Traitors* was listed as No. 168, which would have made it a May 1962 release, as indeed it turned out to be, despite Gilberton’s erratic 1961–1962 publication cycle.)

*[173.] ***The Boy Captain*** (scheduled in 1961 for publication in 1963 but never issued; no artwork for the title is extant; the title appears on a 1961 Gilberton mock-up list of future titles).

CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED, Second Series (Berkley / First Publishing, 1990–1991)

Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea by Jules Verne. Cover, interior art, and adaptation by Garry Gianni (scheduled for publication but never issued; published in black-and-white in 1992 by Dark Horse Comics and in color in 2009 by Flesk Publications).

CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED, Third Series (STUDY GUIDES) (Acclaim Books, 1997–1998)

[SG23.] ***20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*** by Jules Verne; cover by John Paul Leon; digest reissue of 1948 *CI* edition; critical essay by Beth Nachison (July 1997).

[SG24.] ***The Mysterious Island*** by Jules Verne; cover by Richard Case; digest reissue of 1947 *CI* edition; critical essay by Beth Nachison (July 1997).

[SG25.] ***A Journey to the Center of the Earth*** by Jules Verne; cover by Lou Harrison; digest reissue of 1957 *CI* edition; critical essay by Howard Hendrix (July 1997).

[SG26.] ***From the Earth to the Moon*** by Jules Verne; cover by Jim Calafiore; digest reissue of 1953 *CI* edition; critical essay by Gregory Freeley (July 1997).

[SG55.] ***Around the World in 80 Days*** by Jules Verne; cover by Lou Harrison; digest reissue of 1950 *CI* edition; critical essay by Beth Nachison (January 1998).

CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED, Fourth Series (Jack Lake Productions, 2005-present)

47. *Twenty Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* by Jules Verne. Reissue of 1955 PC1 (Ned Land and shark), original interior art (Henry C. Kiefer); scanned edition. Introduction by William B. Jones, Jr. First printing 2008 [HRN 170, 48 pages, \$9.99].

69. *Around the World in Eighty Days* by Jules Verne. Reissue of 1957 PC, original interior art (Henry C. Kiefer). Introduction by William B. Jones, Jr. First printing October 2011 [HRN 171, 48 pages, \$9.99].

138. *A Journey to the Center of the Earth* by Jules Verne. Reissue of 1957 PC (Norman B. Saunders), original interior art (Norman Nodel); scanned edition. Introduction by William B. Jones, Jr. First printing 2008 [HRN 170, 52 pages (three ads plus Albert L. Kanter biography by Jones), \$9.99].

Papercutz CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED DELUXE Series (Papercutz, 2008-present)

7. *Around the World in 80 Days* by Jules Verne. Adapted by Loïc Dauvillier (script) and Aude Soleilhac (art). Translation by Joe Johnson. First printing 2011 [No HRN, 144 pages, \$17.99].

NOTES

1. William B. Jones, Jr., *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, Second Edition* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2011), pp. 274-275.
2. *Ibid.*, p. 135.
3. *Ibid.*
4. *Ibid.*, p. 9.
5. *Ibid.*, p. 11.
6. Dan Malan, *The Complete Guide to Classics Collectibles, Volume One: The U.S. Series of Classics Illustrated and Related Collectibles* (St. Louis: Malan Classical Enterprises, 1991), p. 22.
7. Dan Malan, *The Complete Guide to Classics Illustrated, Volume Two: Foreign Series and Related Collectibles* (St. Louis: Malan Classical Enterprises, 1993, rev. 1996), pp. 8, 10. Because the Verne titles that appeared in foreign series were reprints or translations of the U.S. editions, they will not be discussed here, except incidentally; they are, however, well worth researching, and Malan's guide, intended for collectors rather than a general audience, is the best starting place.
8. Jones, *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, Second Edition*, p. 90.
9. The Hough novel was a 1922 best-seller (now all but forgotten) that scriptwriter Annette T. Rubinstein loathed so much that she asked—but failed to receive—editor Roberta Strauss Feuerlicht's permission to rewrite a substantial portion of the story. See Annette T.

- Rubinstein, Letter to Roberta Strauss, 3 February 1955, quoted in full in Jones, *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, Second Edition* (McFarland, 2011), p. 181.
10. William B. Jones, Jr., "Forty-Eight Pages and Speech Balloons: Robert Louis Stevenson in *Classics Illustrated*," in William B. Jones, Jr., ed., *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered: New Critical Perspectives* (Jefferson, N.C., and London: McFarland & Company, Inc., Publishers, 2003), p. 229.
 11. Jones, *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, Second Edition*, p. 111.
 12. *Ibid.*, p. 270.
 13. *Ibid.*, p. 273.
 14. *Ibid.*, p. 44.
 15. By publishing two successive Verne titles, Gilberton hoped to persuade the Post Office Department that *Classics Illustrated* was a magazine rather than book publisher and therefore entitled to a second-class mailing permit; the Post Office, unfortunately, was not persuaded. See the author's *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, Second Edition* (McFarland, 2011), p. 223.
 16. Madeleine Robins, Interview with author, 23 July 1997.
 17. Gary Gianni, *Jules Verne's Twenty-Thousand Leagues Under the Sea* (Santa Cruz, Calif.: Flesk Publications, 2009).
 18. These entries are taken from Appendices A, K, L, and M in the author's *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, Second Edition* (McFarland, 2011).

William B. Jones, Jr. (wbj514@sbcglobal.net) is the author of *Classics Illustrated: A Cultural History, Second Edition* (McFarland, 2011). Since 2003, he has written introductions or author biographies for each of the reissued titles in Jack Lake Productions' revived *Classics Illustrated* and *Classics Illustrated Junior* series. Jones has also edited *Robert Louis Stevenson Reconsidered: New Critical Perspectives* (McFarland, 2003), and has contributed to the *Journal of Stevenson Studies* and the *James Fenimore Cooper Society Newsletter*.

