

JULES VERNE – ON BOARD A SHIP

By Carole L. Cooney

When Jules was 12 years old, he ran away from home. He joined an ocean-going ship as a cabin boy to wait on the officers and passengers. The ship was stopped by his father before it had put out to sea. Jules is said to have promised his parents that “in the future he would travel only in his imagination.” And that’s what he did when he wrote his fascinating stories. He is known as the Father of Science Fiction.

Setting: On board an ocean-going ship

Characters:

Narrator

Jules

Joseph, a cabin boy

Mr. Longside

Mr. Verne

Narrator: Jules was 12 years old when he decided to seek adventures on the high seas. He left his home without telling anyone and ran all the way to the harbor where a large ocean-going ship was docked. He swiftly ran up the gangplank. On board, he asked to see the Captain.

Joseph: Can I help you, sir?

Jules: Yes. May I see the Captain about becoming a Cabin Boy?

Joseph: Mr. Longside does the hiring. It’s him you want to see.

Jules: Where can I find Mr. Longside?

Joseph: Well, he’s ashore at the moment. Is there anything else I can do for you?

Jules: Would you tell me what a cabin boy does?

Joseph: Of course! I, *being a cabin boy*, can tell you what it’s like. First of all, it’s a wonderful adventure sailing on the high seas. The work I do is waiting on the Captain and the other sailors.

Jules: What does that mean, waiting on the Captain and the other sailors?

Joseph: Well...in the morning, I bring the Captain his breakfast. Then when he’s eaten and finished his grooming, I make his bed and tidy up his room. During the day, I’m at the Captain’s service for any of his needs. As far as the other sailors go, I do little errands for them, like fetching their drinks and tobacco.

Jules: Do you like your life?

Joseph: Oh, yes, especially when there’s a storm brewing. It’s so exciting when the ship’s tossing in the giant waves. Sometimes I think we will never make it to land again. But then, I remember what a great Captain we have and I dump my worries overboard.

Jules: Is that Mr. Longside coming up the gangplank?

Joseph: Indeed it is. (calling) Mr. Longside! Mr. Longside! This lad wants to see you.

Mr. Longside: Yes, what is it lad?

Jules: I'd like to be a cabin boy on this ship. May I...? How do I start?

Mr. Longside: What is your name? AND, do your parents know about this?

Jules: I'm called Jules Verne. *I really* want to do this, Sir.

Mr. Longside: Humm...Well, we can always use another cabin boy and seeing how we're to set sail in an hour, I'll let you join. Joseph, lead this lad down below and get him a uniform.

Narrator: Meanwhile, Mr. and Mrs. Verne realized Jules was not home. They frantically searched their house and the gardens. Finally they asked Jules' brother, Paul, if he knew where Jules might be. Paul suggested they look down at the harbor. And off they went to find Jules.

Mr. Verne: (calling from the dock) Jules! Jules! Are you onboard this ship?

Jules: (proudly on the deck) Yes, Father! I'm now a cabin boy and will set sail shortly.

Mr. Verne: Son, we need to talk about this. Would you please remove your uniform and come home with us? I'm sure we can figure this out.

Jules: Yes, Father. If you insist.

Narrator: The Captain shook hands with Mr. Verne and congratulated him for having such a fine boy who was willing to venture into the world of the mighty ocean. Little did Mr. Verne know that his son, Jules, would one day write an amazing story called 20,000 Leagues Under the Sea.