

VOCABULARY IN CONTEXT

Norway in Literature

Not far from Reine, the village in Norway that *JS* visited in this issue (pp. 8-10), lies the world's strongest and most famous group of whirlpools. These whirlpools, known as the *Moskenesstraumen*, are particularly strong during a full moon, when tides are highest, and during the spring, when the current is fastest.

Storytellers have been inspired by the whirlpools' mysterious power for thousands of years. Most mistakenly label the phenomenon as a single whirlpool.

French author Jules Verne was fascinated by the *Moskenesstraumen*. He featured them in his novel *20,000 Leagues Under the Sea*.

An excerpt from Verne's book appears on the accompanying page. In it, a submarine called the *Nautilus* and a small boat are being sucked into a maelstrom [*MAYL-strum*], or powerful whirlpool. Read the excerpt, then answer the questions below. Use context clues to infer the meanings of the boldface words.

DIRECTIONS: Choose the word or phrase that best defines the following words.

1. agitation

- (A) anger or rage (C) repetition
(B) happiness (D) upset or troubled state

2. aptly

- (A) appropriately (C) preposterously
(B) newly (D) rarely

3. confined

- (A) disappeared (C) opened up
(B) kept within bounds (D) placed carefully

4. deliberately

- (A) nervously (C) seriously
(B) on purpose (D) unexpectedly

5. detach

- (A) appear (C) get stuck
(B) connect (D) separate

6. navel

- (A) central point (C) high point
(B) fruit (D) of a navy

7. predicament

- (A) exciting adventure (C) strong seafaring ship
(B) long journey (D) troublesome situation

8. spiral

- (A) rectangle (C) tower
(B) sea animal (D) winding coil

9. throes

- (A) beginning stages (C) great moments
(B) disturbing noises (D) intense struggles

10. vortex

- (A) destination (C) powerfully whirling mass
(B) filthy prison (D) sharp corner

ONE MORE STEP: Find and circle another unfamiliar word in the excerpt. Use context clues to guess its meaning, then look it up in a dictionary. Write the word and its definition on the back of this page. Then use it in a sentence of your own.

20,000 Leagues Under the Sea

by Jules Verne

from Chapter 22: "The Last Words of Captain Nemo"

One word 20 times repeated, one dreadful word, told me the reason for the **agitation** spreading aboard the *Nautilus*. We weren't the cause of the crew's concern.

"Maelstrom! Maelstrom!" they were shouting.

The Maelstrom! Could a more frightening name have rung in our ears under more frightening circumstances? Were we lying in the dangerous waterways off the Norwegian coast? Was the *Nautilus* being dragged into this whirlpool just as the skiff [small boat] was about to **detach** from its plating?

As you know, at the turn of the tide, the waters **confined** between the Faeroe and Lofoten Islands rush out with irresistible violence. They form a **vortex** from which no ship has ever been able to escape. Monstrous waves race together from every point of the horizon. They form a whirlpool **aptly** called "the ocean's **navel**," whose attracting power extends a distance of 15 kilometers [9.3 miles]. It can suck down not only ships but whales, and even polar bears from the northernmost regions.

This was where the *Nautilus* had been sent accidentally—or perhaps **deliberately**—by its captain. It was sweeping around in a **spiral**

whose radius kept growing smaller and smaller. The skiff, still attached to the ship's plating, was likewise carried around at dizzying speed. I could feel us whirling. I was experiencing that accompanying nausea that follows such continuous spinning motions. We were in dread, in the last stages of sheer horror, our blood frozen in our veins, our nerves numb, drenched in cold sweat as if from the **throes** of dying! And what a noise around our frail skiff! What roars echoing from several miles away! What crashes from the waters breaking against sharp rocks on the seafloor, where the hardest objects are smashed, where tree trunks are worn down and worked into "a shaggy fur," as Norwegians express it!

What a **predicament**! We were rocking frightfully. The *Nautilus* defended itself like a human being. Its steel muscles were cracking. Sometimes it stood on end, the three of us along with it!

"We've got to hold on tight," Ned said. . . . "If we can stay attached to the *Nautilus*, we can still make it!"

He hadn't finished speaking when a cracking sound occurred. . . . The skiff was hurled like a stone from a sling[shot] into the midst of the vortex. My head struck against an iron timber, and with this violent shock I lost consciousness.