

Venomous Snakes And Ladders (Normal)

BAPHL Curator Note: What follows is an excerpt of a log from a game of Venomous Snakes And Ladders, a board game that was briefly popular in 1924. Its rather depressing rules proved to be antithetical to the general excesses of the Roaring Twenties, and it faded into obscurity. Only a few years later, the Great Depression caused Monopoly to evolve into its currently known form. The rules of the game are reproduced below, followed by an image of the game board and the play log itself.

The Rules

Players start at the bottom-left corner at the square labeled “START”, and the goal is to make it to the square labeled “END”. On a player’s turn, they roll a single 6-sided die, and move the number of spaces directed. Movement follows a snake-like pattern: players move to the right when on the bottom row, then move up one square and move towards the left, and so on until the ending square is reached. If a player rolls more than strictly necessary to reach the finish, they are still considered to have reached the ending square.

Complicating matters are the titular ladders and venomous snakes. If a player’s turn ends with them moving onto a square that contains the bottom end of a ladder, they climb up the ladder. If a player ends their turn on a square containing the head of a snake, they slide down the snake’s body and wind up on the square containing its tail. If they instead land on the square containing its tail, they step on the snake’s tail. Enraged, the snake then immediately bites them, the player dies from the poison, and is eliminated.

The Board

BAPHL Curator Note: The journal writer added a crude drawing of the game board. We have contacted the BGHL (Board Game Historical Library) for input on whether the letters present were actually part of the original game board or are an invention of the journal writer.

