

**First Life: Discovering the Connections between Stars, Cells, and How Life Began**, by David Deamer (272 pages, May 2011), offers a thought-provoking chemical explanation of how living systems emerged on the prebiotic earth. Deamer, one of a handful of scientists studying the origin of life, has written an intelligible study of what the earth was like 4 billion years ago, the stellar origin of organic compounds, the development of protocells and nucleic acid polymers, the nuts and bolts of genetic replication, and the possibility of synthesizing life in the laboratory. He also proposes a grand experiment to simulate conditions on the early earth and test the specific components that could lead to self-assembling molecular systems. Deamer injects many personal experiences into his analysis, making what could have been a dry treatise into a journey of discovery into the nature of life itself. \$28.95. University of California. 978-0-520-25832-7.

**Food in the American Military**, by John H. Fisher and Carol Fisher (283 pages, January 2011), reviews the history of army and navy cuisine from the American Revolution to Iraq. An impressive amount of research went into this book, which looks not only at the type of rations issued by the military but also at the transportation, preservation, storage, preparation, and distribution of food for the troops. Numerous photos, many of them from the Quartermaster Museum at Fort Lee, Virginia, provide a rarely seen glimpse of field kitchens, coffee wagons, supply trains, ship galleys, Red Cross canteens, C rations, K rations, MREs, and the chow lines of 21st-century naval culinary specialists. The Fishers also devote a chapter to food given to American prisoners of war and an appendix of recipes from army and navy cookbooks of various eras. \$38.00. McFarland. 978-0-7864-3417-6.

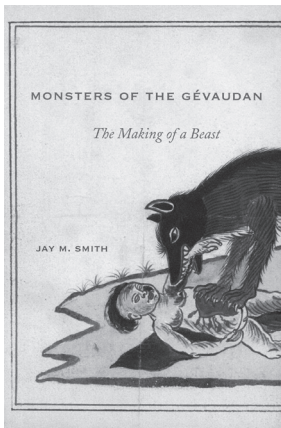
**Fragging: Why U.S. Soldiers Assaulted Their Officers in Vietnam**, by George Lepre (318 pages, January 2011), is a long-overdue discussion of the killing or attempted killing, most often by a fragmentation grenade, of unpopular officers during the Vietnam War in 1968–1973. Lepre draws upon several hundred fragging incidents in Vietnam and concludes that most of them can be explained by a decline in morale and discipline after the Tet Offensive, exacerbated by drug abuse and racial tension. Despite some uneven attempts to prevent these crimes, they continued through the end of the war, with only six soldiers and four marines ever convicted. Lepre notes that fragging was also a problem in the much smaller Australian army. \$34.95. Texas Tech University. 978-0-89672-715-1.

**Modern Schools: A Century of Design for Education**, by R. Thomas Hille (525 pages, February 2011), surveys architectural themes and features that create inspired learning spaces for schools. Part One traces the development of school architecture from the Arts and Crafts tradition in the early 20th century, through functionalism and postwar modernism, and ending with current trends in sustainable design that incorporate technology and teacher-student interaction. Part Two highlights groups of architects who are associated with specific conceptual models or design paradigms. More than 100 schools are highlighted, all currently in operation in North America or Europe. Numerous color photos and plans accompany the text. \$145.00. John Wiley & Sons. 978-0-470-57526-0.

**Monsters of the Gévaudan: The Making of a Beast**, by Jay M. Smith (378 pages, March 2011), explores a curious episode in French history wherein some 100 women and children were attacked, mauled, and killed in the mountainous area of northern Languedoc by a ferocious animal described as an enormous wolf. The depredations lasted from June 1764

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until June 1767, when a hunter, Jean Chastel, killed a large wolf near Mont Mouchet, but theories about the nature of the beast ranged from an African hyena or baboon to a human serial killer or

werewolf. Smith is less concerned about the animal's identity (the attacks were most likely the work of several lone wolves) and more intrigued by the cultural, religious, and political climate in which stories about the beast circulated and flourished, especially in the emerging popular press. The irrational fears that the mysterious events generated among elites and peasants alike, Smith writes, were emblematic of a time when religion was giving way to science and superstition and folk traditions were in conflict with rationalism, allowing two distinct narratives to develop: the beast as rampaging supernatural entity vs. the triumph of human ingenuity over nature. \$35.00. Harvard University. 978-0-674-04716-7.

**Mozart and the Nazis**, by Erik Levi (324 pages, January 2011), examines the ways in which the Third Reich appropriated Mozart's music to serve its propaganda machine, especially in 1941 with the 150th anniversary of the composer's death. Unlike the music of Richard Wagner, whose Teutonic nationalism and perceived anti-Semitism made him a favorite of Hitler, Mozart only began to be touted as a Germanic genius after the annexation of Austria by the Third Reich in 1938. Levi points out that the Nazis had to counter Mozart's libertarian appeal among Jewish musicians and such exiled scholars as Alfred Einstein (who completed the third and greatly expanded edition of the Köchel Catalogue of Mozart's Works in 1937), as well as downplay his European cosmopolitanism, his relationship to Freema-

sony, and his collaboration with the Jewish librettist Lorenzo Da Ponte. \$40.00. Yale University. 978-0-300-12306-7.

**Ruffner's Allusions**, by Frederick G. Ruffner Jr. and Lawrence Urdang (969 pages, 3rd ed., December 2010), is designed for use as a thesaurus of literary and pop-cultural references. Look up a broad topic (death, concealment, tennis, water) and you get a handful of cultural, literary, biblical, and historical allusions that you can use to give your short stories or board reports some added texture. The mixture of ancient, venerable, and modern is weirdly inspirational. For example, "drunkenness" gives you Bacchus and Noah, Tam O'Shanter (Robert Burns) and Christopher Sly (*Taming of the Shrew*), as well as Norm Peterson (*Cheers*) and *Animal House*. The number of entries has increased to nearly 13,000, up from 8,700 in the 1986 edition, due largely to including more real people, technology, television, film, music, non-Christian faiths, children's literature, recent politics, and world history. The index references all the allusions, and the bibliography lists all the sources, from Sir Walter Scott's *The Abbot* to Zimmerman's *Dictionary of Classical Mythology*. \$45.00. Omnigraphics. 978-0-7808-1170-6. *zz*

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