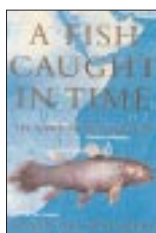


Review

A good read

For gift ideas, or just some compelling reading over the holiday season, try some of our favourites of 1999.



A Fish Caught in Time by Samantha Weinberg (Fourth Estate, £7.99; Harper Collins, \$24.00). The coelacanth, an intriguing fish, previously believed

to be extinct, was re-discovered off the Comoros in 1938 by Marjorie Latimer. An amateur ichthyologist, J.L.B. Smith, then spent the rest of his life hunting more specimens. This book describes the frantic dash to preserve and keep in South Africa the first specimen, and the dramatic way in which it was won from the French. You don't have to be a fan of fish to be consumed by this tale.

The Man who Loved Only Numbers by Paul Hoffman (Fourth Estate, £7.99; Little Brown, \$12.95). Part biography, part popular maths text, this is a racy tale of a weird man, the mathematical genius Paul Erdős. It is an affectionate and funny portrait of a true eccentric, who had no home and lived out of two tattered suitcases for more than 60 years, as he travelled the world collaborating with fellow mathematicians.



Paper by John McCabe (Granta Books, £9.99). Highly qualified, incompetent, oddball geneticist Darren White stumbles on evidence of a crime

— a welcome change from pipetting water and avoiding colleagues such as the Tea Break Terminator. Caught between hallucination and confusion, he pieces the bizarre clues together.

I Wish I'd Made you Angry Earlier by Max Perutz (Oxford University Press, £19.99; Cold Spring Harbor Laboratory Press, \$42.00). A gem of a collection of essays and book reviews that brings to life the stories of some of the greatest scientists of this century. Perutz brings a particular sense of pathos and personal struggle to his history of the science and scientists of the Second World War. Always fascinating, often moving, this is a riveting read.



The Voyage of the Narwhal by Andrea Barrett (Flamingo, £6.99; W.W. Norton \$14.00).

An absorbing novel describing the voyage of the *Narwhal* to the

Arctic in 1855, in the wake of Franklin's infamous expedition. The dynamics of a group of very different characters aboard, and families back home, are handled lucidly and somewhat in the style of 19th-century writing.

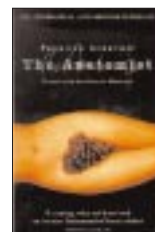


Consilience by Edward O. Wilson (Abacus, £8.99; Random House, \$14.00).

Just out in paperback, this is Wilson's impassioned and thorough argument for the

fundamental unity of all knowledge. It's thought-provoking stuff, for scientists and non-scientists alike. Don't be put off by the scope; dive in and ponder.

Secondary Immunization by B.B. Jordan (Prime Crime, \$5.99). Sex, drugs and immunology loom large in this 'biomystery' from the pen of UCSF immunologist, Frances Brodsky. It features Dr Celeste Braun, Californian immunologist and '90s woman, who becomes embroiled in a sinister experiment that could prove fatal.



The Anatomist by Federico Andahazi (Anchor Books, £6.99; \$12.95).

An exploration of the (pre)discovery of the clitoris by an Italian Renaissance

physician. Part-fantastic, part-realistic, the story shifts along like a whodunnit. Even for those who already know how to find it, this is an evocative description of how it was found.

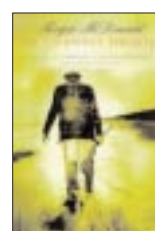


Dorothy Hodgkin: A Life by Georgina Ferry (Granta, £9.99).

A sensitive portrayal of Hodgkin the scientist and Hodgkin the woman, explaining the theory

behind X-ray crystallography along the way. Now out in paperback.

Time, Love, Memory: A Great Biologist and his Quest for the Origins of Behavior by Jonathan Weiner (Alfred A. Knopf, \$27.50; Faber & Faber, £18.99). Long before it became de rigueur to look to the genes for the basis of fundamental behaviours, the geneticist Seymour Benzer set himself the daunting task of unravelling circadian rhythms, mating and learning. Weiner's own strong grasp of biology makes this account of Benzer's enormously influential work both readable and exciting. Give it to anyone who's curious about modern biology.



Mr Darwin's Shooter by Roger McDonald (Anchor Books, £6.99; Penguin, \$13.95).

A novel based on the life of Syms Covington, who worked as a servant to Darwin during his

voyage on the *Beagle*. Intriguing insights into possession and professional rivalries, and master-servant interactions. Learn how to prepare and mount a bird skin.