

# letters

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## history

### Nobel season

Each year — on December 10, the anniversary of the death of Alfred Nobel — the Nobel Prizes in Physics, Chemistry, and Physiology or Medicine are awarded in Stockholm, Sweden. These prizes, along with those for Literature and Peace efforts, were established by the will of Nobel, who died in 1896. Awarding of prizes began in 1901. Among the first recipients were Wilhelm Conrad Röntgen (Physics), for discovering X-rays; Jacobus Henricus van't Hoff (Chemistry), for investigating osmotic pressure; and Emil Adolf von Behring (Physiology or Medicine), for investigating the cause and treatment of diphtheria. The Nobel Foundation web site lists every prize awarded over the last century, and a short biography of every Laureate. By reading the biographies of scientists such as Röntgen,

Marie and Pierre Curie, François Jacob, Jacques Monod and Barbara McClintock, one can catch a glimpse of the lives behind the discoveries — and come away with an impressive sense of scientific passion as well as progress.

In addition to the biographies, the Nobel Foundation site also houses essays

the 1995 prize in Physiology or Medicine along with Christiane Nüsslein-Volhard and Eric Weischaus — describes the career and legacy of Thomas Hunt Morgan, the Columbia University professor who pioneered *Drosophila* research and was awarded the 1933 Prize in Physiology or Medicine. François Jacob — who, with Jacques Monod and André Lwoff, won the 1965 Physiology or Medicine prize for their work on genetic regulation of enzyme and virus synthesis — delineates the founding and development of the Pasteur Institute in Paris, France. Each of these essays, along with many others on the site, contains photographs and interesting links. As Nobel week begins in Stockholm this year to honor the newest set of Laureates, a visit to the Nobel Foundation site — an electronic museum with a deep sense of scientific history — is warranted. TS

[www.nobel.se](http://www.nobel.se)

written by and about Nobel Laureates. Max Perutz — who, with Sir John Kendrew, won the 1962 Chemistry prize for their structures of hemoglobin and myoglobin — chronicles the establishment of the Medical Research Council Laboratory of Molecular Biology in the UK. Edward B. Lewis — who was awarded