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Sommario/riassunto	This is an almost verbatim reproduction of the author's lecture notes written in 1983-84 at the Ohio State University, Columbus, Ohio, USA. A substantial update is given in the bibliography. Over the last 20 plus years, there has been an energetic activity in the field of finite simple group theory related to the monster simple group. Most notably, influential works have been produced in the theory of vertex operator algebras whose research was stimulated by the moonshine of the finite groups. Still, we can ask the same questions now just as we did some 30-40 years ago: What is the monster simple group? Is it really related to the theory of the universe as it was vaguely so envisioned? What lays behind the moonshine phenomena of the monster group? It may appear that we have only scratched the surface. These notes are primarily reproduced for the benefit of young readers who wish to start learning about modular functions used in moonshine.