

Why Look at Animals?

Education Pack

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Introduction: Why look at animals?

The Atkinson welcomes you and your pupils to *Why Look at Animals?*, an exhibition that takes its name from an essay by the British theorist John Berger. We use his ideas to combine works of art from our own collection and from the Arts Council in exciting ways. The show makes us very proud, and we would like to offer satisfying visits to it to as many people as possible. To make this easy for teachers and pupils in the Key Stages 1 through to 4, we have prepared a package of fun and creative exercises, learning activities, discussions and explanations for before, during and after a day at The Atkinson. You will find these activities at the end of this introductory document and we hope that you and your pupils have a lot of fun with it.

Why Look at Animals? views humans' depictions of animals throughout early modern times until today. It is a large show in our exhibition space on the first floor and it plays a central role in our visual art themes of 2017. This resource sheet gives you and other teachers a few ideas and tools for a stress-free and informative visit with school groups. We start with a question:

“*Why look at animals?*” the first and easiest answer is, of course, another question: “*Why not?*”

The exhibition looks at both of these questions at once and also raises some new ones. Working together and working with artists, our curators have borrowed objects, films and installations to show them with paintings and sculpture from the Southport and Sefton Council collection. They all are used to examine how humans have depicted animals since the 18th century which is when, according to the British theorist John Berger, our disassociation from them began.

Berger who lived from 1926 to 2017 wrote famously about art. Fewer may know his words about animals and in 1977, he posed the question above and answered it with a short essay about the creatures around us - in zoos, on farms, in the wild, or at home with us as pets and how we see and think about them.

In this essay, Berger concludes that, “*That look between animal and man (...) has been extinguished*”. He argues that, even though we have more pictures than ever, real animals seem to have vanished out of our portrayals of them. This exhibition asks if that is true and also what that might mean for us if it isn't.

Aims and Rationale

The Atkinson and Our Collection

Why Look at Animals? is a diverse, entertaining and provocative exhibition and is built around artworks from our own collection at The Atkinson.

As with all projects we do, two important goals from the mission of The Atkinson are reflected: first, to safeguard the borough's art and heritage collections and secondly, to be a regional centre for learning and wellbeing.

Why Look at Animals? helps us to do both of these things in collaboration with teachers, pupils and the general public. In showing how images change over time, it teaches us about past and present values in our region and beyond.

Photo albums at home show how pictures change. Before digital cameras, family portraits were done with cumbersome equipment, expensive film and delicate paper made each picture expensive and serious. This is completely different today as our phone snaps are easy and cheap, so we can photograph more often.

These phone snaps tell different stories to those we might find in our grandparent's photo albums. Future generations who look at our pictures might guess, at first glance, that we spent most of our time in restaurants or on beaches. For some of us, this may be true – but, what these photos actually tell us is the value and qualities of leisure time in our society, which is quite different to its value and qualities three generations ago.

These along with other trends and themes can be found in our own collection here at The Atkinson, which encompasses several hundred years of art and other objects from the region. Of particular interest are paintings made before the popularization of photography: they often contain important visual information and stories about Southport, Sefton and the wider region.

Pictures teach us about ourselves and *Why Look at Animals?* asks us to think about how we view our non-human companions in the past and today. To support central goals of a variety of subjects in the National Curriculum, we offer a bit of guidance below for teachers and other educators who might be interested in attending the exhibition with pupils in their charge.

Overview of the Exhibition

John Berger says that we do not *see* enough *real* animals in our lives and he suggests that we have replaced them with *pictures* of animals which is something entirely different altogether.

In what ways could Berger be right or wrong? Few of us still ride horse-drawn carriages or raise our own animals for food. However, many of us have had pets, might eat meat or have been to the zoo. What does it mean to *see* all those animals and might there be different ways of seeing? What, indeed, are we *doing* with all of these pictures?

Artists reflect these questions back to us, with sculptures like *Untitled (Monkey)* by John Isaacs, or paintings like *Guinea Pig* by Dan Hays, both created in 1995. Do we want to think of animals basically like we think of humans – perhaps just lesser, wordless, or incomplete? Could we communicate with them, if we made enough effort? Or are they something else entirely? Do they live in worlds so different to our own that we can only peer in? Is it our modern life that locks them away from us?

Works in the exhibition have been arranged to highlight the variety of artistic techniques and also to show the many differences in our views. *Cavalry Charge* by the Polish artist Stanislaw Mikula depicts warhorses with their riders as single units - fighting a terrible, shared enemy together. As comrades-in-arms, humans and animals become heroes who are dependent on each other.

The Ratcatcher by the Southport artist Philip Connard tells a different story about humans and animals: during his cigarette pause, a ratcatcher sits with his hunting ferret. Although it snuggles on his lap, it is not his pet, holding it with the heavy leather glove that protects him against bites during work, Connard's figure reminds us that some animals serve us and that others may even be our foes.

Berger argues in his essay that our relationship to the world of animals has become poorer. He writes that the last centuries have upset a balance; with a set of open-ended prompts, questions and ideas for discussion, we would like to offer this exhibition and the ideas behind it as a stage for engaging with young pupils about Berger's ideas, as well as about how such ideas and discussion shape the world we live in.

John Berger and his Work 'Why Look at Animals?'

Born in Hackney in 1926, John Berger trained originally as an artist in London. While enjoying success already as a young man and becoming a teacher of drawing, his attention turned increasingly to writing and to social activism. His prize-winning novel *G.* remains perhaps his best-known work of fiction. Until his death in 2017 he also produced critical essays on politics, literature and especially, art. He was also the co-author of an enormous number of plays, film scripts and other written pieces and in 2009 he received the Golden PEN Award for the span of his life's achievement.

Berger addressed the unresolved cultural issues of his time. However, the accessibility of his style also allows non-scholars to enjoy and to use his work and ideas. As an activist, he insisted that criticism always should have a practical application. His texts for the seminal BBC series of art documentaries called *Ways of Seeing* in 1972 were later published on their own; the book is still read today to present essential questions of 20th century cultural criticism to students and a wider audience.

Berger travelled extensively, for both research and pleasure. Always working, he moved from London to Geneva in Switzerland in 1962 and then in 1975 to Quincy, a small farming village in the adjoining region of France. Deeply interested in rural life, it is perhaps here that his attention to the relationships between humans and animals was sharpened.

Published in 1980, his book *About Looking* was a series of short essays about the roles and messages of pictures. It reframed the ideas of earlier theorists about art, such as the German philosopher Walter Benjamin, whilst raising new and modern questions.

The chapter entitled 'Why Look at Animals?' was extensively reproduced and it appeared in book form on its own in 2009. Like much of Berger's work, it may have been used to introduce basic questions of contemporary society. In it, Berger argues that the industrial revolution and the urbanisation of Europe removed real contact with animals from our daily lives and that we have replaced them with pets and with *pictures* of animals to represent the non-human companionship we seem to have lost.

Berger leaves a legacy as one of the most broadly influential thinkers about culture in the past century.

Berger's Sources

John Berger's text inspires for a variety of reasons: not only do we read it as a historical document with critical insights into the conditions of the time against which Berger spoke. Some of which might be very different today, especially in the case of more modern zoos, but also because he illustrates and develops his ideas with a broad and sometimes contradictory range of key sources from anthropology, as well as classical and modern philosophy and literature. Even today, his writings and many of those to which he refers are the subject of discussion, analysis and development.

The works of any of these sources are therefore worth reading in their own right and include:

The Nuer: A Description of the Modes of Livelihood and Political Institutions of a Nilotic People (1940) by Sir Edward Evan (E.E.) Evans-Pritchard (1902 - 1973): A professor of Social Anthropology at the University of Oxford from 1946 to 1970, Evans-Pritchard strongly focused this particular field of anthropology on the relativity and diversity of human institutions, rather than on their evaluative comparison. He was particularly impressed with the Nuer ways of thinking about the role of animals in the world.

The Savage Mind (translated into English in 1966) by Claude Lévi-Strauss (1908 - 2009):

The Chair of Social Anthropology at the Collège De France from 1959 to 1982, Lévi-Strauss established 'structuralist' models for anthropology - arguing, for example, that all societies find local solutions for a basic and universal set of human needs. According to Lévi-Strauss, we satisfy some of these needs with the help of animals.

Essay on the Origin of Languages (published posthumously in French in 1781) by Jean-Jacques Rousseau (1712 - 1778):

A French-speaking native of Geneva during the time of the French Enlightenment, the political philosopher Rousseau argued that all societies pass through a series of stages of 'development' that, sooner or later after the equilibrium of a 'peak', civilizes them away from nature.

Man and Beast (1974) by Roy Willis:

The British structural anthropologist Willis published this book on the symbolic relationships between humans and the animals in their environment. He uses case studies of four African ethnic groups that include the Nuer (Willis refers to Pritchard's work in his own - see above), who possess a particularly rich set of cultural symbols and meanings attached to 'wild' and 'domestic' animals.

The Iliad (written circa 850 BCE) by Homer:

Although scholars debate whether 'Homer' might actually have been a group of poets, his sequential epics *The Iliad* and *The Odyssey* form influential templates for Western literature since their time - they have inspired countless other works of art and even echo in films and literature today. The 'war story' of the *Iliad* establishes conventions of heroism that, even in battle, are shared and mirrored by the characters' noble animals.

The philosophy of René Descartes (1596 - 1650):

The French scientist promoted radically stringent ideas about the application of consistent, empirical methods to mathematics and to science in general. Many of his basic developments are still used; perhaps even more importantly as a philosopher, his interest in *how* we know and *what* we know suggested 'dualism' - a concept that separates a body from the mind that inhabits it, whilst he argued that only human beings could possess reason.

The natural histories of George-Louis Leclerc, Count of Buffon (1707 – 1788):

As a naturalist and mathematician, Buffon was a large and controversial figure of the French Enlightenment. As the Director of the Royal Gardens in Paris (called the Jardin des Plantes today) and author of treatises on Natural History, his theories on the origins, relationships and hierarchical development of organisms distinguished sharply between humans and animals but acknowledged nature as being dynamic, prefiguring Darwin's theories of evolution.

How the Other Half Dies: The Real Reasons for World Hunger (published 1976) by Susan George (born in 1934):

As a French and American social and political analyst, Susan George is an influential member of the Transnational Institute, founded in 1973 to promote critical, practical research on social sustainability. Arguably her most influential work, *How the Other Half Dies* analyses the global food industry importantly, including the rearing of animals as a political and economic tool.

The writings of F. W. Taylor (1856 – 1915):

The American mechanical engineer and competitive athlete was interested in the enhancement of industrial efficiency in both production and management. His research on mechanical movement and on the application of stringent methodologies to systems were branded as 'Taylorism' and adopted by industries worldwide. Whilst revolutionising manufacturing on a global scale, his figure remains controversial, largely due to his recommendation of rigid and hierarchical structures. His manufacturing models were later applied to the food industry.

The research of B. F. Skinner (1904 - 1990):

The American behavioural psychologist and philosopher was the inventor of the 'Skinner Box' currently used almost universally in laboratories to study the effects of 'conditioning' on animal behaviour. His influential theories questioned the existence of actual 'free will' in both animals and humans. Skinner suggested instead that the environment, including other animals and humans influences all beings unknowingly towards particular types of behaviour.

The writings of Beatrix Potter (1866 – 1943):

As a conservationist and natural scientist, Potter also executed her own scientific sketches. Her proficiency in illustration and her interest in classical fairy tales and mythology led her to produce a body of 24 children's tales, the most famous of which is *The Tale of Peter Rabbit*. Whilst including typical animal behaviour in her characters for the purposes of storytelling, she since has been criticised (as by Berger in his essay) for making her animals too 'human'.

The creative output of Walt Disney (1901 – 1966):

The Walt Disney Company, founded almost one hundred years ago by the American film producer and businessman, has been instrumental in the development of film animation techniques. Produced in 1937, *Snow White and the Seven Dwarfs* was the world's first feature-length cartoon. Well-known recurring Disney characters such as Mickey Mouse, Donald Duck and his nephews (to whom Berger refers above), inhabit their own fictional universe, in which they replicate human society and behaviour although no actual humans are present.

History of Animals (written in the 4th century BCE) by Aristotle (384 - 322 BCE):

Regarded as a definitive text for nearly two thousand years, this work was written by the ancient Greek scientist and analytical philosopher in an attempt to apply the principles of philosophical reasoning to the observation of animals. By introducing the concept of categories, and through his theories on the root causes of similarities and differences between animals, Aristotle is credited as having founded the science of zoology.

History and Class Consciousness (translated into English in 1972) by György Lukacs (1885 – 1971):

The Hungarian philosopher extended applications of existing Marxist theory, such as the concept of 'class consciousness' that defines one's beliefs about one's position and roles in society. He used them to discuss entirely new areas of criticism in politics and culture, such as about where our ideas about beauty in art and literature come from, as well as about what determines our attitudes towards nature.

The Naked Ape (1967) and The Human Zoo (1969) by Desmond Morris (born 1928):

Written for the general public, these two works and others presented the research and ideas of the English zoologist and ethologist Morris, who has examined both human and animal behaviour according to structuralist principles. His work on the influence of the environment on human and animal societies has been illustrated with a series of popular films.

Quotations for Discussion Berger and Others

'(...) every tradition (...) between man and nature was broken.' – John Berger
John Berger says to describe both the 19th century particularly in cities and our world today. In what ways could this be true or false?

'(...) animals offer man a companionship which is different from any offered by human exchange.' - John Berger
What sort of companionship might we want from animals, and why?

'In the last two centuries, animals have gradually disappeared. Today we live without them.' - John Berger
Are we indeed 'living without animals'? Could we and should we change this?

'The animal has been emptied of experience and secrets (...).' - John Berger
What such secrets and experiences might this mean?

'(... This) new invented 'innocence' (of animals) begins to provoke in man a kind of nostalgia.' - John Berger
What might this nostalgia be and how do animals seem to help us to feel it?

'(Animals) are creatures of their owner's way of life.' - John Berger
How could an animal 'own' its owner, too?

'The pet offers its owner a mirror (...).' - John Berger
What would this mirror actually reflect to us?

'The animals (we are thinking of) have been co-opted into other categories so that the category animal has lost its central importance.' - John Berger
What could such 'central importance' look like today?

'(A) London housewife (...) said she wanted to kiss and cuddle a lion.' *'(...) the life of a wild animal becomes an ideal.'* - John Berger
What shape might this ideal have and why would one want to kiss and cuddle a lion or another wild animal?

'(The) wrong questions have been addressed to zoos.' - John Berger
What would the 'right' questions for zoos actually be today?

'(Animals)' perennial actions become marginal actions without an object.' - John Berger says that this is what happens in zoos.
Could zoos ever prevent this and what would that mean for the people who visit them?

'If a lion could speak, we wouldn't be able to understand him.' - Ludwig Wittgenstein used this sentence to suggest how language works.
What sorts of languages might animals have? Could we indeed understand any of them?

'If cattle or horses or lions could sculpt like men, they would shape their gods in the likeness of their own.' - The ancient Greek theologian and philosopher Xenophanes appears to have believed in cultural relativity and the innate value of all life.

What, indeed, would animal gods look like? How would they behave?

'Grandma is a rhino / my brother is a dog (...) / Bobby is a monkey / my girlfriend is a horse / But I'm not turning into anything (...)' - Wall of Voodoo, *Animal Day* (1981)

Why do we enjoy imagining people we know as animals?

'Could there be a more mysterious idea for an artist than how Nature is reflected in the eyes of an animal?' - Franz Marc

'Everyone knows the bear - but the bear doesn't know anyone.' - Finnish proverb.

What does this proverb want to tell us?

'We are the transition from ape to man.' - Konrad Lorenz

How does Lorenz suggest that we regard animals?

'I would give years of my life just to be an animal for a short while.' - Elias Canetti

What would it be like to be an animal just 'for a short while'? What would it be like to be human again afterwards?

List of Artists and Works in the Exhibition

Unknown Egyptian artist, New Kingdom (16th – 11th century BCE), coffin fragment in honour of the deceased

Prince Albert (1819 - 1861), a selection of drawings, mid-19th century

Queen Victoria (1819 - 1901), a selection of drawings, mid-19th century

Keith Arnatt (1930 - 2008), *I wonder whether cows wonder?*, 2002

Michael Ayrton (1921 - 1975), *Daedalus Winged*, 1960

Charles Burton Barber (1845 - 1894), *In Disgrace*, 1886

Claude Michel Clodion (1738 - 1814), *Nymph and Satyr Carousing*, c. 1785

John Collier, *Lilith*, 1889

Philip Connard (1875 - 1958), *The Ratcatcher*, 1920

Horatio Henry Couldery (1832 - 1918), *Kittens*, 1869
Chow Chows, 1869

Peter Doig (born 1959), *Red Deer*, 1990

John Drysdale (born 1929), *Jumbo Helps*, 1978

Thomas William Earl (1815 - 1885), *Yorkshire Terrier*, 1863

Thomas Faed (1826 - 1900), *The Pet Lamb*, 1860

Elizabeth Frink (1930 - 1993), *The General*, 1979

Laura Ford (born 1961), *Giraffe*, 1998

Jean Ignace Isidore Gerard Grandville (1803 -1847), *Scenes from the private and public lives of animals*, 1852
Les Métamorphoses du Jour, 1869

Clifford Hall (1904 - 1973), *The Girl with a Cat*, 1969

Dan Hays (born 1966), *Guinea Pig*, 1995

Dennis Hearne (born 1948), *Feeding Horse, Killarney, Co. Kerry*, 1972

Henry Inlander (1925 - 1983), *Orang Outang II*, 1966

John Isaacs (born 1968), *untitled (Monkey)*, 1995

G. G. Kilburne, *Lady and Parrot*, 1877

Sir Edwin Landseer (1803 - 1873), *The Angler's Guard*, 1830
A Saluki Dog, 1840/44

Stanislaw Mikula (1907 - 1977), *Polish Cavalry Charge*, 1939

George Morland (1763 - 1804), *Farmyard*,
A Country Call, both late 18th century

Alfred James Munnings (1878 - 1959), *Trooper in Full Marching Order*, 1918

Peter Philip (born 1935), *Cage III*, 1978

Andrea Roe *Forever and Ever*, dove in a death-mimicking trance: a defensive tactic prompted by tucking the head under its wing. 2012 (with Jack Fishwick)

Andrea Roe *Intimate*, great tit on a mourning comb. 2017 (with Jack Fishwick)

Andrea Roe *Babbler*, coal tit, found stand, glove finger. 2009

Henrietta Ronner-Knip (1821 - 1909), *Happy Days*, 1895

David Shrigley (born 1968), *See the little creature in the giant cage*, 1998

Jem Southam (born 1950), *The Pig, the Goat and the Lamb*, 1988

Arnold Van Praag (1930 - 2008), *Butcher, Sheep's Head and Trotters*, 1982

Brett Whiteley (1939 - 1992), *Swinging Monkey II (Zoo series)*, 1965

Curators Statement

“This exhibition is inspired by the work of one of the great art critics and thinkers of the 20th century. John Berger’s essay ‘Why Look at Animals?’ challenges the way we look at the natural world and continues to prompt artists to question how we see and understand other species. What does it mean to look at animals and what are they thinking when they look at us? Certainly our relationship with animals has changed dramatically over the last 200 years and this grouping together of many different artists’ perspectives will be thought-provoking and will encourage further discussion.”

– Stephen Whittle, Principal Manager, Museum, Gallery & Operations

Exhibition Activities

Key Stages 1 and 2

STORIES

Allow pupils 10 minutes to find their favourite painting and write down the story that they see. Stories can then be read to the class.

English

CREATIVE THINKING

If the animals in the artworks were real, how would they get to the Museum?

How do you think these artworks got here?

If dogs, cats, cows and mice could all paint, how would they paint people?

PETS

Which animals look like pets?

How do you know?

Which animals look as if they are working?

How can you tell?

Have you ever had a pet?

Have you ever known someone else's pet?

Are there any animals here who remind you of real animals you know?

COUNTING

How many different types of animals are shown?

Maths

GRAPHS

Make a graph showing all of the animals that are shown.

Make a graph showing the number of 'pets' and 'farm animals'.

ANIMAL CARE

Which is your favourite animal from the works of art?

What sort of food and care would this animal need for a comfortable life?

Science

FOOD CHAIN

Which animals here are carnivores, herbivores and omnivores?

What does each of these animals eat?

Which animals share with others?

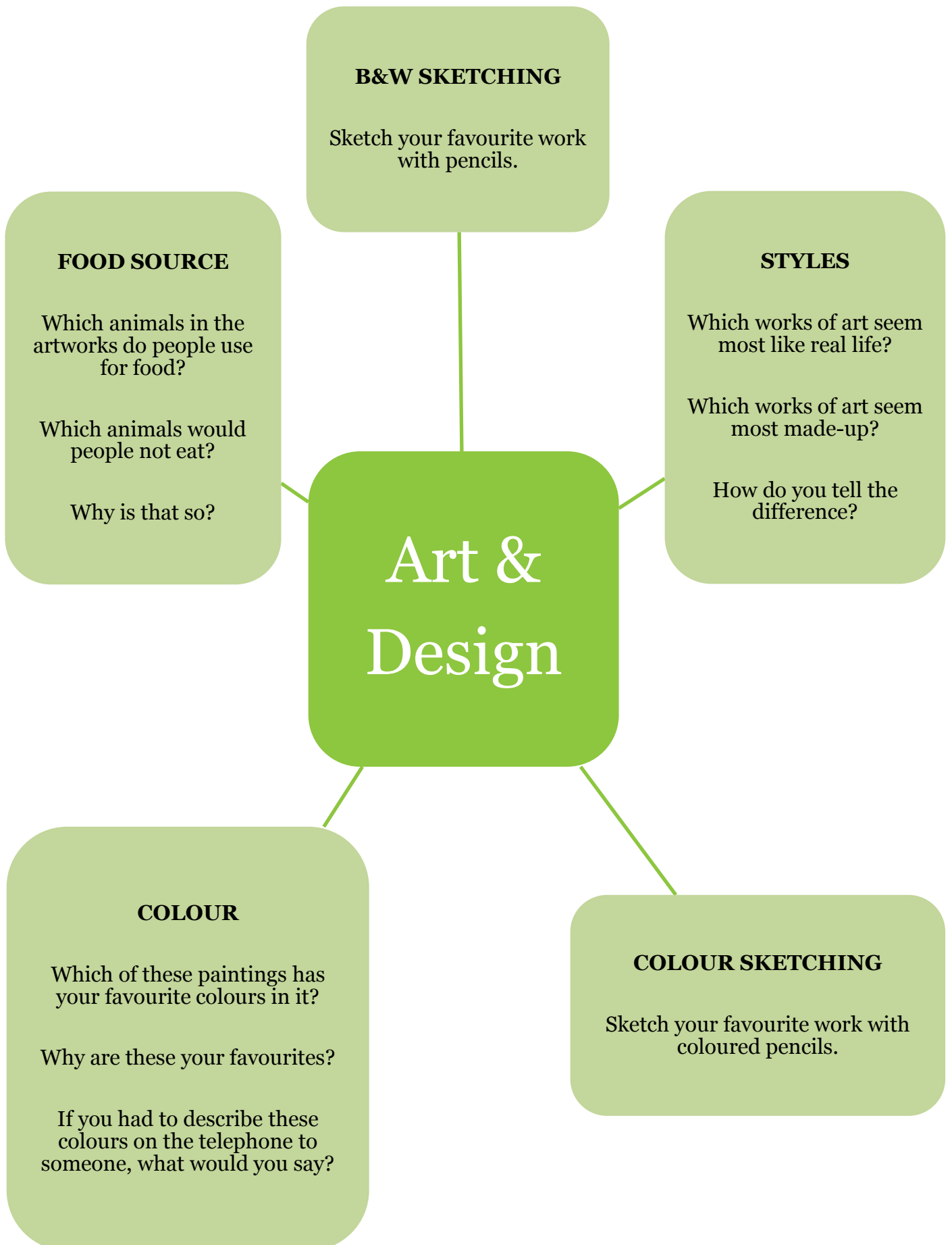
TIME OF LIFE

Which animals here are older?

Which animals here are younger?

How can you tell how old an animal is?

Are there any baby animals shown in the artworks? What are they doing?



Languages

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SPANISH

How many of these animals can you name in a foreign language like Spanish?

Can you say a sentence about them in Spanish?

Can you say something about the story of the artwork in Spanish?

FRENCH

How many of these animals can you name in a foreign language like French?

Can you say a sentence about them in French?

Can you say something about the story of the artwork in French?

Geography



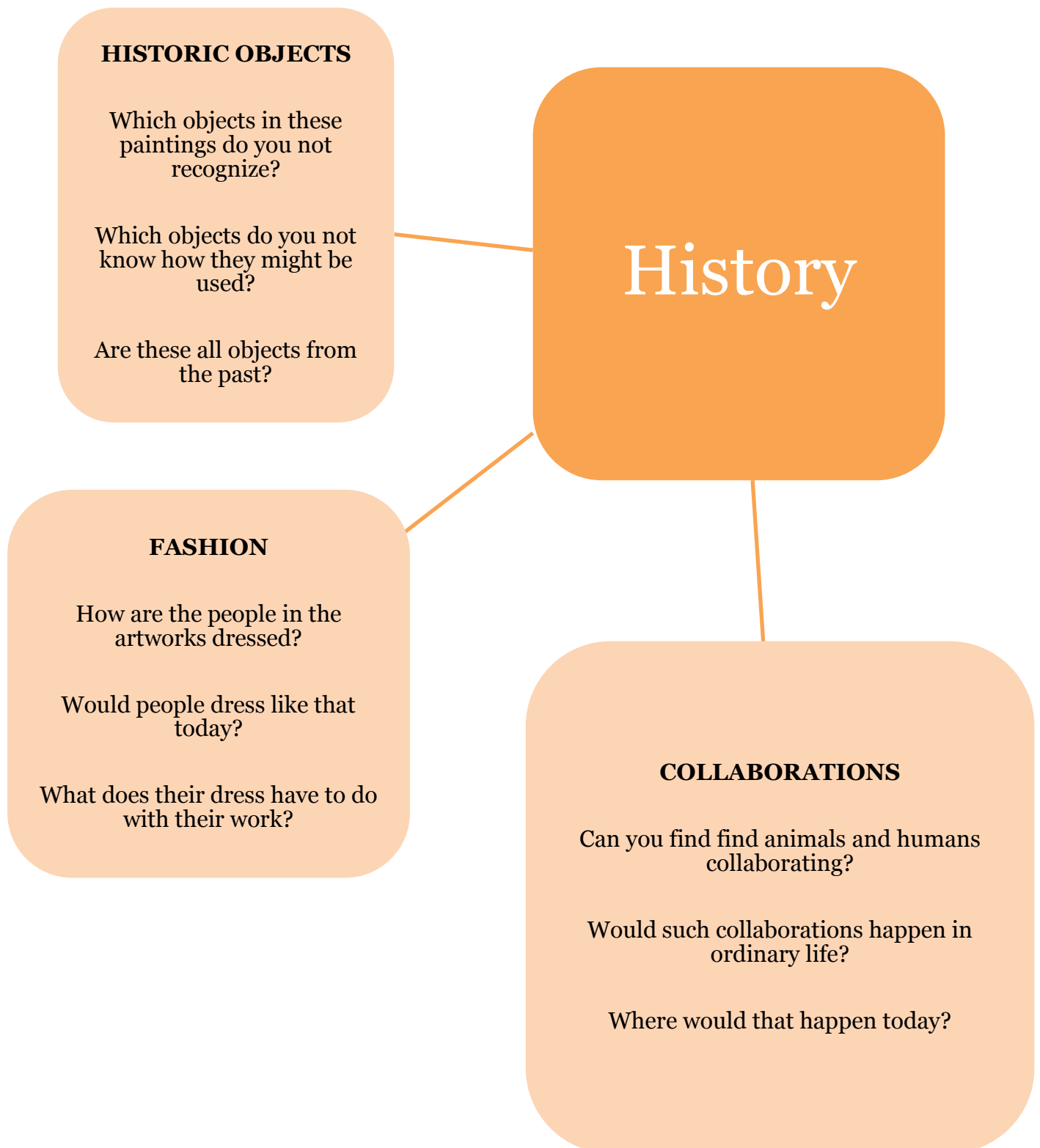
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graph TD; A[Geography] --- B[MAPS]; B --- C[Can you make a map of the exhibition?]; B --- D[Can you show on the map where one would find the cows, dogs and sheep?]; B --- E[How would you show this on a map?];
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MAPS

Can you make a map of the exhibition?

Can you show on the map where one would find the cows, dogs and sheep?

How would you show this on a map?



Music

RECOGNISING SOUND

Can you tell the differences between the music below from the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries?

What are the differences like?

Are they anything like the differences in the artworks of the show?

18th century: Georg Handel, *Messiah*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=juckXS8PktE>

19th century: Edward Elgar, *Imperial March Op. 32*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=adNk7S4j8GA>

20th century: Benjamin Britten, *Five Waltzes for Piano, Op. 3:*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=xQZFKHpkXmw>

20th century: Benjamin Britten, *Friday Afternoons (Cuckoo):*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=FTMLWuY36KQ>

Exhibition Activities Key Stages 3 and 4

INVESTIGATING

In groups of 2s or 3s, allow pupils fifteen minutes to identify distinct themes such as 'pets' or 'working animals'.

How have the artists treated these themes? These groups may then present their findings to the class.

STORIES

Allow pupils 15 minutes to write a story based on the artwork of their choice.

This story should not only be a description but should be a creative composition for which the artwork could be an illustration.

Pupils should photograph their chosen artwork for later discussion.

English

POETRY

Allow pupils to read a poem from each of the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries in front of a work of art from these periods.

What is a 'Romantic' poem? How would one recognize a 'Romantic' painting?

REVIEWS

Allow pupils 15 minutes to write a review of the exhibition.

What did they like?

What did they not like?

Why does the exhibition ask the question 'why look at animals?'

How does it answer the question?

Who chooses the artworks to do so, and how?

Maths

STATISTICS

Allow pupils 20 minutes to make a statistical analysis of the exhibition.

Various species of animal (horse, cow, dog, cat) should be investigated to find out how often they are depicted in each of the last three centuries.

Are some animals shown more than others at particular times? If so, why?

ECOSYSTEMS

Allow pupils fifteen minutes to identify all the ecosystems that may be found in the depictions.

How realistic are these depictions?

Are there artists who seem to have ignored realism?

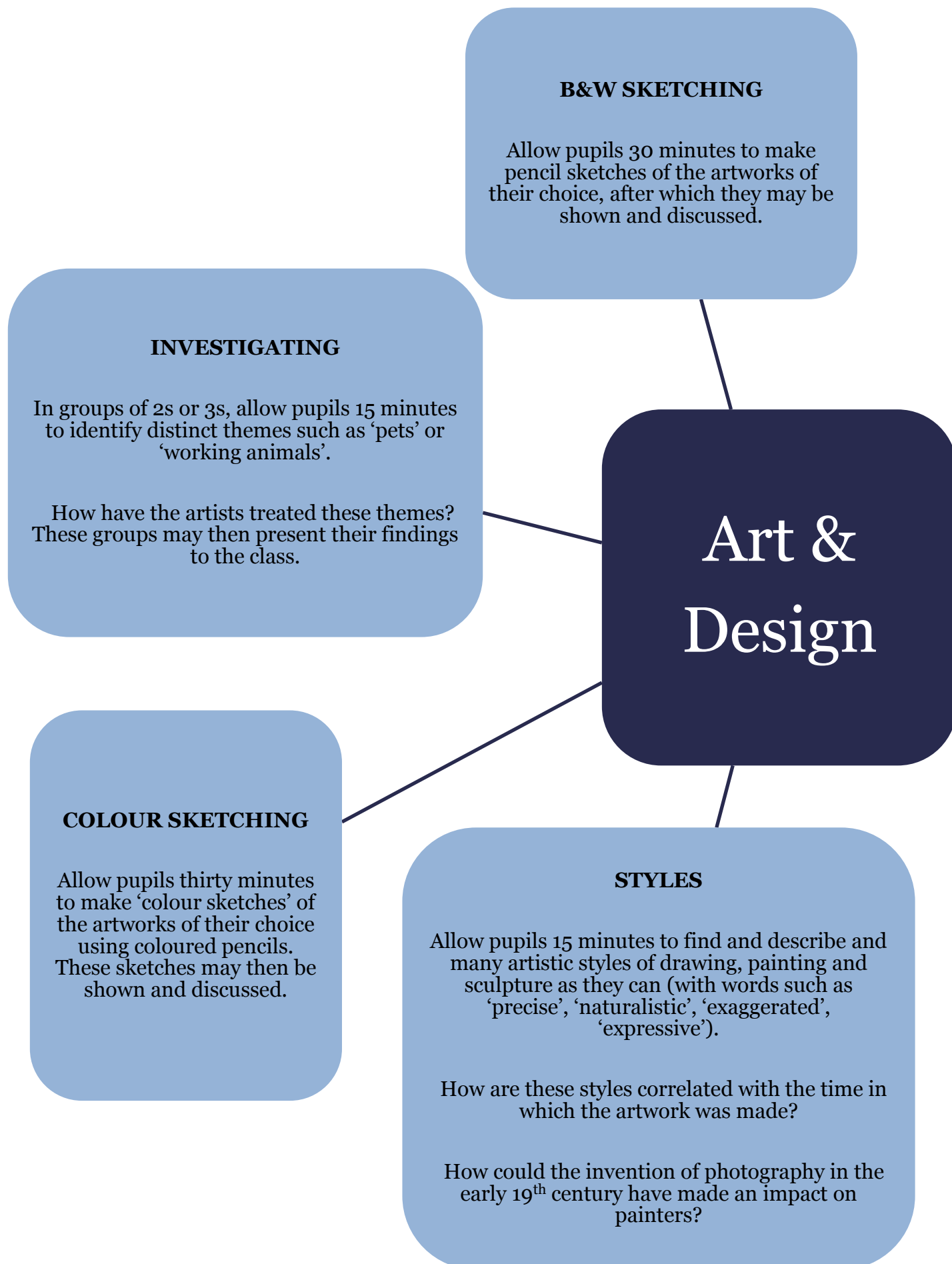
Which ones are these, and why would they do so?

Science

SURVIVAL

Allow pupils fifteen minutes to identify depictions of animals who are dependent on human beings for survival.

Why is this so?



GOVERNMENT

Allow pupils 10 minutes to tell what they know of forms of government and society in the UK in the 18th, 19th and 20th centuries.

What clues can they find in the artworks about the societies in the time in which they were made?

Citizenship

HUMAN RIGHTS

Allow pupils 10 minutes to tell what they know about the development of human rights in the UK in the past three centuries.

What clues can they find in the artworks about this?

What clues about the development of animal rights can they find?

Design & Technology

ANIMALS vs MACHINERY

Allow pupils 10 minutes to find depictions of animals performing tasks that would be done by machines today.

How and why has this changed?

Are there tasks done today by machines that would be better done by animals?

Geography

ORIGINS

Allow pupils 15 minutes to find depictions of animals that are not native to the UK and to find their places of origin on a map of the world.

Would any of these animals be found in the UK today?

Where? How did they get here?

How would the artists find them?

POETRY

Spend 15 minutes with pupils listening to British music and poetry from each of the centuries represented in front of a work of art from that time.

How would one describe the differences in styles?

Where do such differences come from?

DARWIN

How did Darwin's *Origin of Species*, published in 1859, change the way we looked at animals?

Can pupils find any evidence of such changes in the artworks from this time or later?

History

INDUSTRIALISATION

How might the Act of Union in 1707 or industrialisation in the 19th century have changed peoples' and animals' lives in Britain?

Can pupils find any evidence of these changes in the artworks?

Languages

TOURS

In groups of 2s or 3s, allow pupils 10 minutes to prepare a tour of their favourite works in the exhibition in the language of study.

Groups may then conduct these tours, explaining in their language of study what they like and dislike, as well as why they have chosen the artworks.

Music



CHANGE

Allow pupils thirty minutes to hear, reflect and play music from each of the artistic periods represented in the past three centuries since the Romantic era in front of a representative work.

How can one describe the musical and artistic changes?

Why do such changes happen in a society?

John Berger's 1977 Essay, Why Look at Animals?

The 19th century, in western Europe and North America, saw the beginning of a process, today being completed by 20th century corporate capitalism, by which every tradition which has previously mediated between man and nature was broken. Before this rupture, animals constituted the first circle of what surrounded man. Perhaps that already suggests too great a distance. They were with man at the centre of his world. Such centrality was of course economic and productive. Whatever the changes in productive means and

social organisation, men depended upon animals for food, work, transport, clothing.

Yet to suppose that animals first entered the human imagination as meat or leather or horn is to project a 19th century attitude backwards across the millenia. Animals first entered the imagination as messengers and promises. For example, the domestication of cattle did not begin as a simple prospect of milk and meat. Cattle had magical functions, sometimes oracular, sometimes sacrificial. And the choice of a given species as magical, tameable *and* alimentary was originally determined by the habits, proximity and "invitation" of the animal in question.

White ox good is my mother
And we the people of my sister,
The people of Nyariau Bul . . .
Friend, great ox of the spreading horns,
which ever bellows amid the herd,
Ox of the son of Bul Maloa.

(The Nuer: a description of the modes of livelihood and political institutions of a Nilotic people, by Evans-Pritchard.)

Animals are born, are sentient and are mortal. In these things they resemble man. In their superficial anatomy — less in their deep anatomy — in their habits, in their time, in their physical capacities, they differ from man. They are both like and unlike.

“We know what animals do and what beaver and bears and salmon and other creatures need, because once our men were married to them and they acquired this knowledge from their animal wives.” (Hawaiian Indians quoted by Lévi-Strauss in *The Savage Mind*.)

The eyes of an animal when they consider a man are attentive and wary. The same animal may well look at other

species in the same way. He does not reserve a special look for man. But by no other species except man will the animal's look be recognised as familiar. Other animals are held by the look. Man becomes aware of himself returning the look.

The animal scrutinises him across a narrow abyss of non-comprehension. This is why the man can surprise the animal. Yet the animal — even if domesticated — can also surprise the man. The man too is looking across a similar, but not identical, abyss of non-comprehension. And this is so wherever he looks. He is always looking across ignorance and fear. And so, when he is *being seen* by the animal, he is being seen as his surroundings are seen by him. His recognition of this is what makes the look of the animal familiar. And yet the animal is distinct, and can never be confused with man. Thus, a power is ascribed to the animal, comparable with human power but never coinciding with it. The animal has secrets which, unlike the secrets of caves, mountains, seas, are specifically addressed to man.

The relation may become clearer by comparing the look of an animal with the look of another man. Between two men the two abysses are, in principle, bridged by language. Even if the encounter is hostile and no words are used (even if the two speak different languages), the *existence* of language

allows that at least one of them, if not both mutually, is confirmed by the other. Language allows men to reckon with each other as with themselves. (In the confirmation made possible by language, human ignorance and fear may also be confirmed. Whereas in animals fear is a response to signal, in men it is endemic.)

No animal confirms man, either positively or negatively. The animal can be killed and eaten so that its energy is added to that which the hunter already possesses. The animal

can be tamed so that it supplies and works for the peasant. But always its lack of common language, its silence, guarantees its distance, its distinctness, its exclusion, from and of man.

Just because of this distinctness, however, an animal's life, never to be confused with a man's, can be seen to run parallel to his. Only in death do the two parallel lines converge and after death, perhaps, cross over to become parallel again: hence the widespread belief in the transmigration of souls.

With their parallel lives, animals offer man a companionship which is different from any offered by human exchange. Different because it is a companionship offered to the loneliness of man as a species.

Such an unspeaking companionship was felt to be so equal that often one finds the conviction that it was man who lacked the capacity to speak with animals — hence the stories and legends of exceptional beings, like Orpheus, who could talk with animals in their own language.

What were the secrets of the animal's likeness with, and unlikeness from man? The secrets whose existence man recognised as soon as he intercepted an animal's look.

In one sense the whole of anthropology, concerned with the passage from nature to culture, is an answer to that question. But there is also a general answer. All the secrets were about animals as an *intercession* between man and his origin. Darwin's evolutionary theory, indelibly stamped as it is with the marks of the European 19th century, nevertheless belongs to a tradition, almost as old as man himself. Animals interceded between man and their origin because they were both like and unlike man.

Animals came from over the horizon. They belonged *there* and *here*. Likewise they were mortal and immortal. An animal's blood flowed like human blood, but its species was undying and each lion was Lion, each ox was Ox. This — maybe the first existential dualism — was reflected in the treatment of animals. They were subjected *and* worshipped, bred *and* sacrificed.

Today the vestiges of this dualism remain among those who live intimately with, and depend upon, animals. A peasant becomes fond of his pig and is glad to salt away its pork. What is significant, and is so difficult for the urban stranger to understand, is that the two statements in that sentence are connected by an *and* and not by a *but*.

The parallelism of their similar/dissimilar lives allowed animals to provoke some of the first questions and offer answers. The first subject matter for painting was animal.

Probably the first paint was animal blood. Prior to that, it is not unreasonable to suppose that the first metaphor was animal. Rousseau, in his *Essay on the Origins of Languages*,

maintained that language itself began with metaphor: “As emotions were the first motives which induced man to speak, his first utterances were tropes (metaphors). Figurative language was the first to be born, proper meanings were the last to be found.”

If the first metaphor was animal, it was because the essential relation between man and animal was metaphoric. Within that relation what the two terms — man and animal — shared in common revealed what differentiated them. And vice versa.

In his book on totemism, Lévi-Strauss comments on Rousseau’s reasoning: “It is because man originally felt himself identical to all those like him (among which, as Rousseau explicitly says, we must include animals) that he came to acquire the capacity to distinguish *himself* as he distinguishes *them* — ie, to use the diversity of species for conceptual support for social differentiation.”

To accept Rousseau’s explanation of the origins of language is, of course, to beg certain questions (what was the minimal social organization?)

... to beg certain questions (what was the minimal social organisation necessary for the break-through of language?). Yet no search for origin can ever be fully satisfied. The intercession of animals in that search was so common precisely because animals remain ambiguous.

All theories of ultimate origin are only ways of better defining what followed. Those who disagree with Rousseau are contesting a view of man, not a historical fact. What we are trying to define, because the experience is almost lost, is the universal use of animal-signs for charting the experience of the world.

Animals were seen in eight out of twelve signs of the zodiac. Among the Greeks, the sign of each of the twelve hours of the day was an animal. (The first a cat, the last a crocodile.) The Hindus envisaged the earth being carried on the back of an elephant and the elephant on a tortoise. For the Nuer of the southern Sudan (see Roy Willis's *Man and Beast*), "all creatures, including man, originally lived together in fellowship in one camp. Dissension began after Fox persuaded Mongoose to throw a club into Elephant's face. A quarrel ensued and the animals separated; each went its own way and began to live as they now are, and to kill each other. Stomach, which at first lived a life of its own in the bush, entered into man as the first of the animals."

the bush, entered into man so that now he is always hungry. The sexual organs, which had also been separate, attached themselves to men and women, causing them to desire one another constantly. Elephant taught man how to pound millet so that now he satisfies his hunger only by ceaseless labour. Mouse taught man to beget and women to bear. And Dog brought fire to man."

The examples are endless. Everywhere animals offered explanations, or more precisely, lent their name or character to a quality, which like all qualities, was, in its essence, mysterious.

What distinguished man from animals was the human capacity for symbolic thought, the capacity which was inseparable from the development of language in which words were not mere signals, but signifiers of something other than themselves. Yet the first symbols were animals. What distinguished men from animals was born of their relationship with them.

The *Iliad* is one of the earliest texts available to us, and in it the use of metaphor still reveals the proximity of man and animal, the proximity from which metaphor itself arose. Homer describes the death of a soldier on the battlefield and then the death of a horse. Both deaths are equally transparent to Homer's eyes, there is no more refraction in one case than the other.

“Meanwhile, Idomeneus struck Erymas on the mouth with his relentless bronze. The metal point of the spear passed right through the lower part of his skull, under the brain and smashed the white bones. His teeth were shattered; both his eyes were filled with blood; and he spurted blood through his nostrils and his gaping mouth. Then the black cloud of Death descended on him.” That was a man.

Three pages further on, it is a horse who falls: “Sarpedon, casting second with his shining spear, missed Patroclus but struck his horse Pedasus on the right shoulder. The horse whinnied in the throes of Death, then fell down in the dust and with a great sigh gave up his life.” That was animal.

Book 17 of the *Iliad* opens with Menelaus standing over the corpse of Patroclus to prevent the Trojans stripping it. Here Homer uses animals as metaphoric references, to convey, with irony or admiration, the excessive or superlative qualities of different moments. *Without the example of animals,*

such moments would have remained indescribable. "Menelaus bestrode his body like a fretful mother cow standing over the first calf she has brought into the world."

A Trojan threatens him, and ironically Menelaus shouts out to Zeus: "Have you ever seen such arrogance? We know the courage of the panther and the lion and the fierce wild-boar, the most high-spirited and self-reliant beast of all, but that, it seems, is nothing to the prowess of these sons of Panthous . . .!"

Menelaus then kills the Trojan who threatened him, and nobody dares approach him. "He was like a mountain lion who believes in his own strength and pounces on the finest heifer in a grazing herd. He breaks her neck with his powerful jaws, and then he tears her to pieces and devours her blood and entrails, while all around him the herdsmen and their dogs create a din but keep their distance — they are heartily scared of him and nothing would induce them to close in."

Centuries after Homer, Aristotle, in his *History of Animals*, the first major scientific work on the subject, systematises the comparative relation of man and animal.

“In the great majority of animals there are traces of physical qualities and attitudes, which qualities are more markedly differentiated in the case of human beings. For just as we pointed out resemblances in the physical organs, so in a number of animals we observe gentleness and fierceness, mildness or cross-temper, courage or timidity, fear or confidence, high spirits or low cunning, and, with regard to intelligence, something akin to sagacity. Some of these qualities in man, as compared with the corresponding qualities in animals, differ only quantitatively: that is to say, man has more or less of this quality, and an animal has more or less of some other; other qualities in man are represented

by analogous and not identical qualities; for example, just as in man we find knowledge, wisdom and sagacity, so in certain animals there exists some other natural potentiality akin to these. The truth of this statement will be the more clearly apprehended if we have regard to the phenomena of childhood: for in children we observe the traces and seeds of what will one day be settled psychological habits, though psychologically a child hardly differs for the time being from an animal . . .”

To most modern “educated” readers, this passage, I think, will seem noble but too anthropomorphic. Gentleness, cross-temper, sagacity, they would argue, are not moral qualities which can be ascribed to animals. And the behaviourists would support this objection.

Until the 19th century, however, anthropomorphism was integral to the relation between man and animal and was an expression of their proximity. Anthropomorphism was the residue of the continuous use of animal metaphor. In the last two centuries, animals have gradually disappeared. Today we live without them. And in this new solitude, anthropomorphism makes us doubly uneasy.

The decisive theoretical break came with Descartes. Descartes internalised, *within man*, the dualism implicit in the human relation to animals. In dividing absolutely body from soul, he bequeathed the body to the laws of physics and mechanics, and, since animals were soulless, the animal was reduced to the model of a machine.

The consequences of Descartes’s break followed only slowly. A century later, the great zoologist Buffon, although accepting and using the model of the machine in order to classify animals and their capacities, nevertheless displays a tenderness towards animals which temporarily reinstates them as companions. This tenderness is half envious.

What man has to do in order to transcend the animal, to transcend the mechanical within himself, and what his unique spirituality leads to, is often anguish. And so, by comparison and despite the model of the machine, the animal seems to him to enjoy a kind of innocence. The animal has been emptied of experience and secrets, and this new invented "innocence" begins to provoke in man a kind of nostalgia. For the first time, animals are placed in a *receding* past. Buffon, writing on the beaver, says this:

"To the same degree as man has raised himself above the state of nature, animals have fallen below it: conquered and turned into slaves, or treated as rebels and scattered by force, their societies have faded away, their industry has become unproductive, their tentative arts have disappeared; each species has lost its general qualities, all of them retaining only their distinct capacities, developed in some by example, imitation, education, and in others, by fear and necessity during the constant watch for survival. What visions and plans can these soulless slaves have, these relics of the past without power?

"Only vestiges of their once marvellous industry remain in far deserted places, unknown to man for centuries, where each species freely used its natural capacities and perfected

them in peace within a lasting community. The beavers are perhaps the only remaining example, the last monument to that animal intelligence . . .”

Although such nostalgia towards animals was an 18th century invention, countless *productive* inventions were still necessary — the railway, electricity, the conveyor belt, the canning industry, the motor car, chemical fertilisers — before animals could be marginalised.

During the 20th century, the internal combustion engine displaced draught animals in streets and factories. Cities, growing at an ever increasing rate, transformed the surrounding countryside into suburbs where field animals, wild or domesticated, became rare. The commercial exploitation of certain species (bison, tigers, reindeer) has rendered them almost extinct. Such wild life as remains is increasingly confined to national parks and game reserves.

Eventually, Descartes’s model was surpassed. In the first stages of the industrial revolution, animals were used as machines. As also were children. Later, in the so-called post-industrial societies, they are treated as raw material. Animals required for food are processed like manufactured commodities.

“Another giant [plant], now under development in North Carolina, will cover a total of 150,000 hectares but will employ only 1,000 people, one for every 15 hectares. Grains will be sown, nurtured and harvested by machines, including airplanes. They will be fed to the 50,000 cattle and hogs . . . those animals will never touch the ground. They will be bred, suckled and fed to maturity in specially designed pens.” (Susan George’s *How the Other Half Dies*.)

This reduction of the animal, which has a theoretical as well as economic history, is part of the same process as that by which men have been reduced to isolated productive and consuming units. Indeed, during this period an approach to animals often prefigured an approach to man. The mechanical view of the animal’s work capacity was later applied to that of workers. F. W. Taylor who developed the “Taylorism” of time-motion studies and “scientific” management of industry proposed that work must be “so stupid” and so phlegmatic that he (the worker) “more nearly resembles in his mental make-up the ox than any other type.” Nearly all modern techniques of social conditioning were first established with animal experiments. As were also

the methods of so-called intelligence testing. Today behaviourists like Skinner imprison the very concept of man within the limits of what they conclude from their artificial tests with animals.

Is there not one way in which animals, instead of disappearing, continue to multiply? Never have there been so many household pets as are to be found today in the cities of the richest countries. In the United States, it is estimated that there are at least forty million dogs, forty million cats, fifteen million cage birds and ten million other pets.

In the past, families of all classes kept domestic animals because they served a useful purpose — guard dogs, hunting dogs, mice-killing cats, and so on. The practice of keeping animals regardless of their usefulness, the keeping, exactly, of *pets* (in the 16th century the word usually referred to a lamb raised by hand) is a modern innovation, and, on the social scale on which it exists today, is unique. It is part of that universal but personal withdrawal into the private small family unit, decorated or furnished with mementoes from the outside world, which is such a distinguishing feature of consumer societies.

The small family living unit lacks space, earth, other animals, seasons, natural temperatures, and so on. The pet is either sterilised or sexually isolated, extremely limited in its exercise, deprived of almost all other animal contact, and fed with artificial foods. This is the material process which lies behind the truism that pets come to resemble their masters or mistresses. They are creatures of their owner's way of life.

Equally important is the way the average owner regards his pet. (Children are, briefly, somewhat different.) The pet *completes* him, offering responses to aspects of his character which would otherwise remain unconfirmed. He can be to

his pet what he is not to anybody or anything else. Furthermore, the pet can be conditioned to react as though it, too, recognises this. The pet offers its owner a mirror to a part that is otherwise never reflected. But, since in this relationship the autonomy of both parties has been lost (the owner has become the-special-man-he-is-only-to-his-pet, and the animal has become dependent on its owner for every physical need), the parallelism of their separate lives has been destroyed.

The cultural marginalisation of animals is, of course, a more complex process than their physical marginalisation. The animals of the mind cannot be so easily dispersed. Sayings, dreams, games, stories, superstitions, the language itself, recall them. The animals of the mind, instead of being dispersed, have been co-opted into other categories so that the category *animal* has lost its central importance. Mostly they have been co-opted into the *family* and into the *spectacle*.

Those co-opted into the family somewhat resemble pets. But having no physical needs or limitations as pets do, they can be totally transformed into human puppets. The books and drawings of Beatrix Potter are an early example; all the animal productions of the Disney industry are a more recent and extreme one. In such works the pettiness of current social practices is *universalised* by being projected on to the animal kingdom. The following dialogue between Donald Duck and his nephews is eloquent enough.

“DONALD: Man, what a day! What a perfect day for fishing, boating, dating or picnicking — only I can’t do *any* of these things!

NEPHEW: Why not, Unca Donald? What’s holding you back?

DONALD: The Bread of Life boys! As usual, I’m broke and its eons till payday.

NEPHEW: You could take a walk Unca Donald — go bird-watching.

DONALD: (groan!) I may *have to*! But first, I'll wait for the mailman. He may bring something good newswise!

NEPHEW: Like a cheque from an unknown relative in Moneyville?"

Their physical features apart, these animals have been absorbed into the so-called silent majority.

The animals transformed into spectacle have disappeared in another way. In the windows of bookshops at Christmas, a third of the volumes on display are animal picture books. Baby owls or giraffes, the camera fixes them in a domain which, although entirely visible to the camera, will never be entered by the spectator. All animals appear like fish seen through the plate glass of an aquarium. The reasons for this are both technical and ideological: Technically the devices used to obtain ever more arresting images — hidden cameras, telescopic lenses, flashlights, remote controls and so on — combine to produce pictures which carry with them numerous indications of their normal *invisibility*. The images exist thanks only to the existence of a technical clairvoyance.

A recent, very well-produced book of animal photographs (*La Fête Sauvage* by Frédéric Rossif) announces in its preface: "Each of these pictures lasted in real time less than three hundredths of a second, they are far beyond the capacity of the human eye. What we see here is something never before seen, because it is totally invisible."

In the accompanying ideology, animals are always the observed. The fact that they can observe us has lost all significance. They are the objects of our ever-extending knowledge. What we know about them is an index of our power, and thus an index of what separates us from them. The more we know, the further away they are.

Yet in the same ideology, as Lukacs points out in *History and Class Consciousness*, nature is also a value concept. A value opposed to the social institutions which strip man of his natural essence and imprison him. "Nature thereby acquires the meaning of what has grown organically, what was not created by man, in contrast to the artificial structures of human civilisation. At the same time, it can be understood as that aspect of human inwardness which has remained natural, or at least tends or longs to become natural once more." According to this view of nature, the life of a wild animal becomes an ideal, an ideal internalised as a feeling surrounding a repressed desire. The image of a wild animal becomes the starting-point of a daydream: a point from which the day-dreamer departs with his back turned.

The degree of confusion involved is illustrated by the following news story: “London housewife Barbara Carter won a ‘grant a wish’ charity contest, and said she wanted to kiss and cuddle a lion. Wednesday night she was in a hospital in shock and with throat wounds. Mrs Carter, 46, was taken to the lions’ compound of the safari park at Bewdley, Wednesday. As she bent forward to stroke the lioness, Suki, it pounced and dragged her to the ground. Wardens later said. ‘We seem to have made a bad error of judgment. We have always regarded the lioness as perfectly safe’.”

The treatment of animals in 19th century romantic painting was already an acknowledgement of their impending disappearance. The images are of animals *receding* into a wildness that existed only in the imagination. There was, however, one 19th century artist, who was obsessed by the transformation about to take place, and whose work was an uncanny illustration of it. Grandville published his *Public and Private Life of Animals* in instalments between 1840 and 1842.

At first sight, Grandville's animals, dressed up and performing as men and women, appear to belong to the old tradition, whereby a person is portrayed as an animal so as to reveal more clearly an aspect of his or her character. The device was like putting on a mask, but its function was to unmask. The animal represents the apogee of the character trait in question: the lion, absolute courage: the hare, lechery. The animal once lived near the origin of the quality. It was through the animal that the quality first became recognisable. And so the animal lends it his name.



But as one goes on looking at Grandville's engravings, one becomes aware that the shock which they convey derives, in fact, from the opposite movement to that which one first assumed. These animals are not being "borrowed" to explain people, nothing is being unmasked; on the contrary. These animals have become prisoners of a human/social situation into which they have been press-ganged. The vulture as landlord is more dreadfully rapacious than he is as a bird. The crocodiles at dinner are greedier at the table than they are in the river.

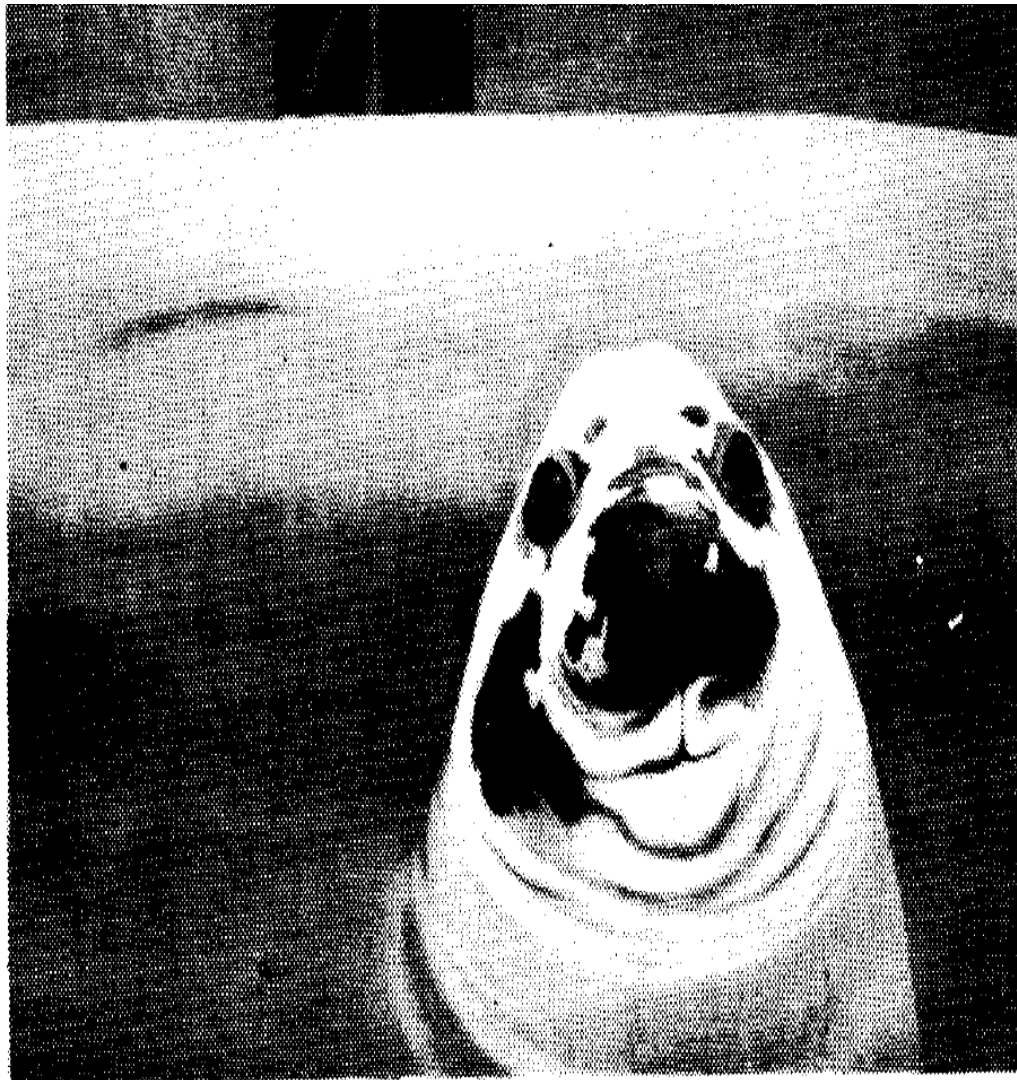
Here animals are not being used as reminders of origin, or as moral metaphors, they are being used *en masse* to "people" situations. The movement that ends with the banality of Disney, began as a disturbing, prophetic dream in the work of Grandville.

The dogs in Grandville's engraving of the dog-pound are in no way canine; they have dogs faces, but what they are suffering is imprisonment *like men*.

The bear is a good father shows a bear dejectedly pulling a pram like any other human bread-winner. Grandville's first volume ends with the words "Goodnight then, dear reader. Go home, lock your cage well, sleep tight and have pleasant dreams. Until tomorrow." Animals and populace are becoming synonymous, which is to say the animals are fading away.

A later Grandville drawing, entitled *The animals entering the steam ark*, is explicit. In the Judaeo-Christian tradition, Noah's Ark was the first ordered assembly of animals and man. The assembly is now over. Grandville shows us the great departure. On a quayside a long queue of different species is filing slowly away, their backs towards us. Their postures suggest all the last minute doubts of emigrants. In the distance is a ramp by which the first have already

entered the 19th century ark, which is like an American steamboat. The bear. The lion. The donkey. The camel. The cock. The fox. Exeunt.



“About 1867,” according to the *London Zoo Guide*, “a music hall artist called the Great Vance sang a song called *Walking in the zoo is the OK thing to do*, and the word ‘zoo’ came into everyday use. London Zoo also brought the word ‘Jumbo’ into the English language. Jumbo was an African elephant of mammoth size, who lived at the zoo between 1865 and 1882. Queen Victoria took an interest in him and eventually he ended his days as the star of the famous Bar-

num circus which travelled through America — his name living on to describe things of giant proportions.”

Public zoos came into existence at the beginning of the period which was to see the disappearance of animals from daily life. The zoo to which people go to meet animals, to observe them, to see them, is, in fact, a monument to the impossibility of such encounters. Modern zoos are an epitaph to a relationship which was as old as man. They are not seen as such because the wrong questions have been addressed to zoos.

When they were founded — the London Zoo in 1828, the Jardin des Plantes in 1793, the Berlin Zoo in 1844, they brought considerable prestige to the national capitals. The prestige was not so different from that which had accrued to the private royal menageries. These menageries, along with

the private royal menageries. . . gold plate, architecture, orchestras, players, furnishings, dwarfs, acrobats, uniforms, horses, art and food, had been demonstrations of an emperor's or king's power and wealth. Likewise in the 19th century, public zoos were an endorsement of modern colonial power. The capturing of the animals was a symbolic representation of the conquest of all distant and exotic lands. "Explorers" proved their patriotism by sending home a tiger or an elephant. The gift of an exotic animal to the metropolitan zoo became a token in subservient diplomatic relations.

Yet, like every other 19th century public institution, the zoo, however supportive of the ideology of imperialism, had to claim an independent and civic function. The claim was that it was another kind of museum, whose purpose was to further knowledge and public enlightenment. And so the first questions asked of zoos belonged to natural history; it was then thought possible to study the natural life of animals even in such unnatural conditions. A century later, more

sophisticated zoologists such as Konrad Lorenz asked behaviouristic and ethological questions, the claimed purpose of which was to discover more about the springs of human action through the study of animals under experimental conditions.

Meanwhile, millions visited the zoos each year out of a curiosity which was both so large, so vague and so personal that it is hard to express in a single question. Today in France 22 million people visit the 200 zoos each year. A high proportion of the visitors were and are children.

Children in the industrialised world are surrounded by animal imagery: toys, cartoons, pictures, decorations of every sort. No other source of imagery can begin to compete with that of animals. The apparently spontaneous interest that children have in animals might lead one to suppose that this has always been the case. Certainly some of the earliest toys (when toys were unknown to the vast majority of the population) were animal. Equally, children's games, all over the world, include real or pretended animals. Yet it was not until the 19th century that reproductions of animals became a regular part of the decor of middle class childhoods — and then, in this century, with the advent of vast display and selling systems like Disney's — of all childhoods.

In the preceding centuries, the proportion of toys which were animal, was small. And these did not pretend to realism, but were symbolic. The difference was that between a traditional hobby horse and a rocking horse: the first was merely a stick with a rudimentary head which children rode like a broom handle: the second was an elaborate “reproduction” of a horse, painted realistically, with real reins of leather, a real mane of hair, and designed movement to resemble that of a horse galloping. The rocking horse was a 19th century invention.

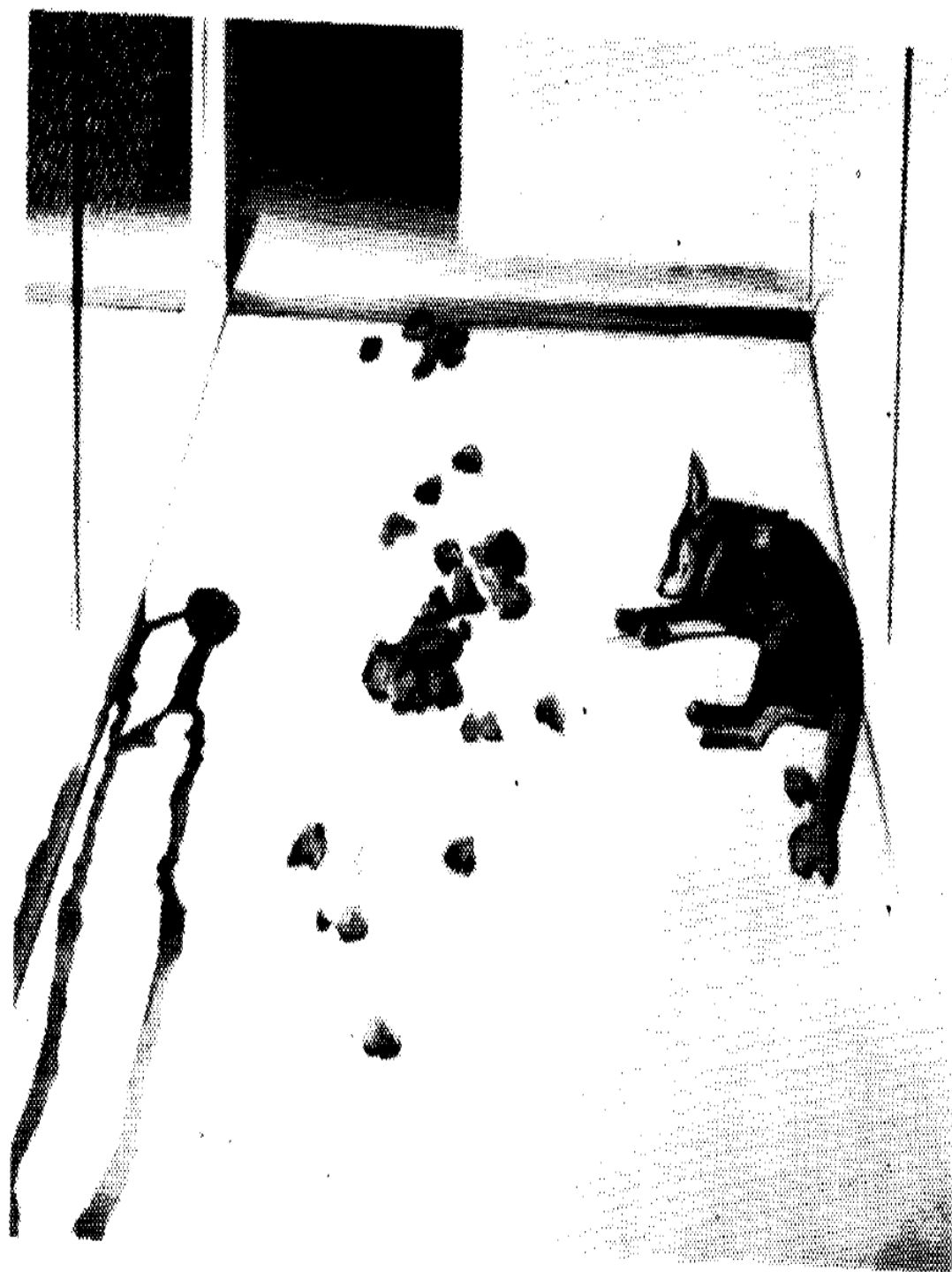
This new demand for verisimilitude in animal toys led to different methods of manufacture. The first stuffed animals were produced, and the most expensive were covered with real animal skin — usually the skin of still-born calves. The same period saw the appearance of soft animals — bears, tigers, rabbits — such as children take to bed with them. Thus the manufacture of realistic animal toys coincides, more or less, with the establishment of public zoos.

The family visit to the zoo is often a more sentimental occasion than a visit to a fair or a football match. Adults take children to the zoo to show them the originals of their “reproductions”, and also perhaps in the hope of re-finding some of the innocence of that reproduced animal world which they remember from their own childhood.

The animals seldom live up to the adults' memories, whilst to the children they appear, for the most part, unexpectedly lethargic and dull. (As frequent as the calls of animals in a zoo, are the cries of children demanding: Where is he? Why doesn't he move? Is he dead?) And so one might summarise the felt, but not necessarily expressed question of most visitors as: Why are these animals less than I believed?

And this unprofessional, unexpressed question is the one worth answering.

A zoo is a place where as many species and varieties of animal as possible are collected in order that they can be seen, observed, studied. In principle, each cage is a frame round the animal inside it. Visitors visit the zoo to look at animals. They proceed from cage to cage, not unlike visitors in an art gallery who stop in front of one painting, and then move on to the next or the one after next. Yet in the zoo the view is always wrong. Like an image out of focus. One is so accustomed to this that one scarcely notices it any more; or, rather, the apology habitually anticipates the disappointment, so that the latter is not felt. And the apology runs like this: What do you expect? It's not a dead object you have come to look at, it's alive. It's leading its own life. Why should this coincide with its being properly visible? Yet the reasoning of this apology is inadequate. The truth is more startling.



However you look at these animals, even if the animal is up against the bars, less than a foot from you, looking outwards in the public direction, *you are looking at something that has been rendered absolutely marginal*; and all the concentration you can muster will never be enough to centralise it. Why is this?

Within limits, the animals are free, but both they themselves, and their spectators, presume on their close confinement. The visibility through the glass, the spaces bet-

ween the bars, or the empty air above the moat, are not what they seem — if they were, then everything would be changed. Thus visibility, space, air, have been reduced to tokens.

The decor, accepting these elements as tokens, sometimes reproduces them to create pure illusion — as in the case of painted prairies or painted rock pools at the back of the boxes for small animals. Sometimes it merely adds further tokens to suggest something of the animal's original landscape — the dead branches of a tree for monkeys, artificial rocks for bears, pebbles and shallow water for crocodiles. These added tokens serve two distinct purposes: for the spectator they are like theatre props: for the animal they constitute the bare minimum of an environment in which they can physically exist.

The animals, isolated from each other and without interaction between species, have become utterly dependent upon their keepers. Consequently most of their responses have been changed. What was central to their interest has been replaced by a passive waiting for a series of arbitrary outside interventions. The events they perceive occurring around them have become as illusory in terms of their natural responses, as the painted prairies. At the same time this very isolation (usually) guarantees their longevity as specimens and facilitates their taxonomic arrangement.

All this is what makes them marginal. The space which they inhabit is artificial. Hence their tendency to bundle towards the edge of it. (Beyond its edges there may be real space.) In some cages the light is equally artificial. In all cases the environment is illusory. Nothing surrounds them except their own lethargy or hyperactivity. They have nothing to act upon — except, briefly, supplied food and — very occasionally — a supplied mate. (Hence their perennial actions become marginal actions without an object.) Lastly, their dependence and isolation have so conditioned their responses that they treat any event which takes place around them — usually it is in front of them, where the public is — as marginal. (Hence their assumption of an otherwise exclusively human attitude — indifference.)

Zoos, realistic animal toys and the widespread commercial diffusion of animal imagery, all began as animals started to be withdrawn from daily life. One could suppose that such innovations were compensatory. Yet in reality the innovations themselves belonged to the same remorseless movement as was dispersing the animals. The zoos, with their theatrical design for public display, were a part of the same process.

their theatrical decor for display, were in fact demonstrations of how animals had been rendered absolutely marginal. The realistic toys increased the demand for the new animal puppet: the urban pet. The reproduction of animals in images — as their biological reproduction in birth becomes a rarer and rarer sight — was competitively forced to make animals ever more exotic and remote.

Everywhere animals disappear. In zoos they constitute the living monument to their own disappearance. And in doing so, they provoked their last metaphor. *The Naked Ape*, *The Human Zoo*, are titles of world bestsellers. In these books the zoologist, Desmond Morris, proposes that the unnatural behaviour of animals in captivity can help us to understand, accept and overcome the stresses involved in living in consumer societies.

All sites of enforced marginalisation — ghettos, shanty towns, prisons, madhouses, concentration camps — have something in common with zoos. But it is both too easy and too evasive to use the zoo as a symbol. The zoo is a demonstration of the relations between man and animals; nothing else. The marginalisation of animals is today being followed by the marginalisation and disposal of the only class



who, throughout history, has remained familiar with animals and maintained the wisdom which accompanies that familiarity: the middle and small peasant. The basis of this wisdom is an acceptance of the dualism at the very origin of the relation between man and animal. The rejection of this dualism is probably an important factor in opening the way to modern totalitarianism. But I do not wish to go beyond the limits of that unprofessional, unexpressed but fundamental question asked of the zoo.

The zoo cannot but disappoint. The public purpose of zoos is to offer visitors the opportunity of looking at animals. Yet nowhere in a zoo can a stranger encounter the look of an animal. At the most, the animal's gaze flickers and passes on. They look sideways. They look blindly beyond. They scan mechanically. They have been immunised to encounter, because nothing can any more occupy a *central* place in their attention.

Therein lies the ultimate consequence of their marginalisation. That look between animal and man, which may have played a crucial role in the development of human society, and with which, in any case, all men had always lived until less than a century ago, has been extinguished. Looking at each animal, the unaccompanied zoo visitor is alone. As for the crowds, they belong to a species which has at last been isolated.

This historic loss, to which zoos are a monument, is now irredeemable for the culture of capitalism.