ANIMAL

BIS ✦

NOVUS

Well, this is a first! Seeking an interesting change and development, we decided on 'Animal' as the theme for this edition.

'Animal' feels like a concrete concept, a word that's easy to understand, you might think. Yet, as our writers and interviewees have evidenced in the subsequent pages, 'Animal' is simultaneously material and abstract. Animals are living beings exhibiting physical characteristics (see Minchan's exploration of animal adaptations, page 13). They also suffer under abuse and overexploitation (see Soohyun's advocacy for better animal protection laws, page 14) that - now we get to the abstract part - reflects a lack of empathy and kindness that still permeates our society.

Similarly, Olivia (page 1) and Colin (page 5) examined how humans' interpretation of animals reveal our own ethical dilemmas and hypocrisy respectively. As you might have noticed, for this edition we interviewed members of the school community and inquired them for their thoughts about the theme of 'Animal'. Specifically, we asked 5 questions (see page 10) linked to the physical and conceptual aspects of 'Animal'. Through the responses, you will uncover different perspectives and analyses that will no doubt make you question your assumptions about this theme. If not, you will feel intrigued nonetheless!

Most importantly, me and the entire Novus team - we hope you will enjoy reading this magazine!

Hoang Thai Anh

Contents

THE PSYCHOLOGY BEHIND

THE PERCEPTION OF

ANIMALS

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INTRODUCTION

The wolf wears sheepskin. He sneaks among the sheep, until darkness falls, and he eats the sheep one by one. This is the story of The Wolf in Sheep's Clothing. Animals are often used as objects in stories or artworks to reflect human characteristics and nature, especially using the connotations behind a wolf and a sheep. These animals are brought to life through countless paintings, their colours and mood conveying deeper meanings such as human morality.

By utilising animals we see as prey and predator, such as a sheep and a wolf, these artists attempt to make sense of the human perception of "good" and "bad." One of the most famous representations of the wolf and the sheep is one we see in Austin Manchester's oil painting, "Wolf in Sheep's Clothing" (2004), where the wolf's greed is hidden under the purity of the sheep's clothing. The painting portrays a lesson of false virtue, warning people to look beyond one's appearance. This is a commentary on human nature, much like how many other artworks convey a lesson or a message, using the connotations of different animals.

ARTWORKS PORTRAYING WOLF AND SHEEP

AUSTIN MANCHESTER, "WOLF IN SHEEP'S CLOTHING" OIL ON WOOD (2004)

AUGUST FRIEDRICH SCHENCK, "ANGUISH" OIL ON CANVAS (1878)

The sheep generally represents innocence and purity, due to their gentle, non-aggressive, and herd nature. Psychologically, people tend to associate their white wool with calmness and goodness. This perception of sheep is further built up by paintings such as "Anguish" (Schenck, 1878). Schenck often paints animals in bleak, emotional scenes, where they are usually surrounded by a harsh environment like snow, storm, or death itself. In Anguish, a grieving mother sheep stands over her lamb buried in snow, with black crows circling them, showing indifference to the tragedy they are faced with.

Immediately, the sheep's grief evokes compassion as her mournful expression humanises her pain. Because a sheep represents innocence and purity, her despair comments on the unfair suffering of the weaker prey in nature. This pushes the viewers to reflect on the cruelty and indifference of the world, just like the scavenging crows that show no mercy or warmth. Schenck challenges the morals of the people that overlook pain that is not their own and also suggests that these emotions and morality are not unique to humans.

JAMES MCNEILL WHISTLER "SYMPHONY IN WHITE, NO. 1: THE WHITE GIRL" OIL ON WOOD (1861)

As for the wolf, "Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl" (Whistler, 1861) depicts a scene of neutral colours with a young woman dressed in white, standing on the darker wolfskin rug. The wolf's head can be seen still baring its teeth, staring directly at the audience. This sense that the fourth wall has been broken by a predator creates an unnerving image. However, this threatening creature is suppressed under a composed young woman in a white dress, which again, represents innocence.

This time, the wolf represents the wildness or the suppressed instincts of the supposedly calm woman. Her suppression of the wolf could symbolise moral control, reflecting humanity's moral challenges and almost drawing out compassion as well, not because of helplessness like in "Anguish", but because it mirrors our own inner restraint. The viewer's empathy comes from recognising that same struggle within themselves: The constant tension between instinct and morality that defines human nature.

INTERPRETING THE WOLF AND THE SHEEP IN SYMBOLISM

In a way, the wolf starts to represent more than just the evil and greedy nature of humans. The fact that the wolf co-exists with purity and innocence reflects the moral duality within humanity. This also highlights the irony of simplifying morality into "good" and "bad," like sheep and wolf, black and white. In reality, these animals display complex behaviours. Individuals like the wolf are not representation of cruelty and evil, they maintain balance in food chains, and display loyalty and coordination within their packs.

Sheeps are praised and seen as pure due to their passive nature and obedience, despite it showing a lack of independence. People often equate being "good" with blindly following authority and avoiding conflict. The sheep in "Anguish" also further criticises the unnecessary but common suffering of the weaker creatures. In both paintings, the audiences are reminded that morality is the conscious act of navigating the shades of grey, also recognising that outward appearances often hide deeper truths.

IN CONCLUSION...

Ultimately, through the depiction of wolves and sheep, these artworks challenge viewers to reconsider traditional ideas of morality and virtue. Whether it is the innocent grief of the sheep in "Anguish", the deceptive wolf in "Wolf in Sheep's Clothing", or the restrained predator beneath the composed woman in "Symphony in White, No. 1: The White Girl", animals are used as mirrors of human behaviour, emotion, and ethical struggle. They remind audiences that morality is not fixed, but is instead shaped by instinct and conscience. In this way, art becomes a space for moral contemplation, using the animal world as a lens to explore the complexities of human ethics.

ANIMALS ASSIST IN UNDERSTANDING OUR PAST, AND IF WE ARE ATTENTIVE, ANIMAL TOTEMS CAN REVEAL GLIMPSES INTO OUR FUTURE.

— SKULL BLISS

HUMANS VS ANIMALS

HOW FAR DO HUMAN ACTIONS REALLY DIFFER FROM THOSE OF AN ANIMAL?

WRITTEN BY: COLIN NOAH GIBSON Y12
DESIGNED BY: QUE NHI LUONG Y9

HOW FAR DO HUMAN ACTIONS REALLY DIFFER FROM THOSE OF AN ANIMAL?

INTRODUCTION

Have you ever wondered what really was the difference between us and an animal that you would see at the zoo? At first, you might think that we are a more civilized species, or even somewhat "smarter". According to the Cambridge Dictionary (2020), being civilized is acting in a calm and responsible way, exactly how we choose to perceive ourselves. Many animals have been thought to be especially aggressive and pose a danger to us (unlike a civilized animal would), as we are told from a very young age. We are taught that crocodiles, for example, will use their strong bites to kill their prey and anyone that poses a threat to them.

However this doesn't stop us, humans, from acting any more differently and having major wars, discriminating against our own kind and destroying natural habitats in the process (very much unlike a civilized species would) mainly out of greed instead of necessity for survival. So I beg you to ask this question again: What really is the difference between us and an animal?

HUMAN CONQUEST VS. ANIMAL INSTINCT

In the past and continuing into the present, greed was seen in the conquest for territory as a means to gain resources in the land and assert power over the globe. These territorial gains were often made out of greed by a group of people who believed there was economic or social gain from this. In 1608, when the British invaded India, they claimed that this would help them increase trade; however, this was mainly done to help their own industrial revolution. Through the gain of this territory, they had access to an abundance of raw materials like cotton, spices and minerals which was essential to building the local economies back at home in England. This would result in the oppression of the local communities, stripping them of their rights and freedoms. In the end, this resulted in the uprising in 1857, as people wanted to reclaim their freedom.

In contrast to us, predatory animals typically fight out of instinct rather than plain greed. This instinct can range from hunting for other animals as food, necessary for their survival, to defending their territory against intruders, which contains crucial resources.

For example, primates like chimpanzees can create a social structure in which higher-ranking individuals will assert their dominance over lower-ranking ones. This will allow them to monopolize lower-ranking chimps, granting them access to resources and reproduction opportunities.

Arguably, this is similar to human actions, suggesting that human and animal actions can both be exploitative.

HUMAN DEVELOPMENT

When asking how smart humans really are, we often think about how we have made scientific advances, such as space travel and medical breakthroughs. Even though animals may not have sent each other to space, they learn to live with and adapt to the environment in which they are living. Beavers, for instance, have learnt to build dams out of logs and sticks in order to create a safe environment from their predators. In turn, this has inspired our way of building modern-day dams to prevent floods. This suggests that we as humans aren't really that creative at all; rather, we find existing things in nature and adapt them to meet our needs.

Furthermore, humans regularly judge our development through our communication skills. While it is true that we have managed to develop effective communication between each other, we are not the only species that can do this. For example, dolphins communicate through a combination of clicks, whistles, and body language, and wolves use howls to coordinate hunting efforts.

One example can be found in insects. According to The Smithsonian, honey bees perform an elaborate "waggle dance", which is an unusual form of symbolic communication. This dance conveys an exact distance, direction, and quality of a food source to their hive mates. The direction of the straight "waggle run" points relative to the position of the sun, and the duration of the run indicates the distance, highlighting a remarkable ability for silent, geographical-related communication.

CONCLUSION

Overall, the answer to this question isn't quite black and white. Animals mostly act out their own deep-rooted survival instincts as opposed to us humans acting out our greed, which ends up leading to environmental catastrophes. As a society that prides itself on Creativity and progression and considering our elaborate social structures and generations of innovations, we might not think that it is possible for a less dominating species to have its own form of development. Overall, it becomes evident that we possess a form of intellect that can be used for various reasons, but we still choose to use it to achieve our goals without thinking about the long-term consequences that it can cause.
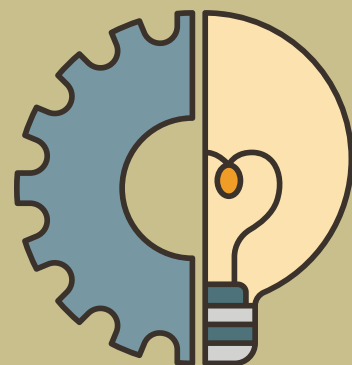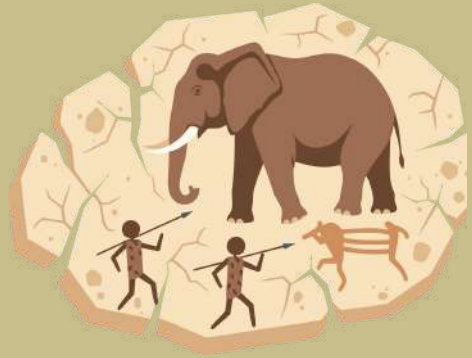
Theme Interviews

This is the first time we tried a theme like 'Animal', and to commemorate that and engage with our community we decided to conduct interviews with the following questions:

1. Are greed and survival one and the same?
2. Why do we put animals on the morality spectrum?
3. How do we implement animal rights protection laws effectively?
4. Would you rather be a wolf or a sheep?
5. If humans went extinct tomorrow, what other animal do you think would take over the world and how?

Below is the community's answers (Disclaimer - The ideas portrayed are interviewees' opinions and have not been fact-checked):

"Are greed and survival one and the same?"
Teacher 1: "I would say no; survival is about taking what you need and greed is about taking more than you need." (Then we asked him to link this idea to animals) "I guess you could have a greedy animal", "For example, a fat lion that ate too much."

Teacher 2: "Survival is about... Um... Kind of wanting, like making sure you've got what you need to thrive or to flourish", "Greed would imply that you've already got what you need and yet you still want more", "I would say that animals living in the wild almost aren't capable of greed", "They don't have enough freedom over their own situation".

Student 3: "I don't get the question" (After Olivia explained to him in Korean) "In economy there's luxury good and there's need good. One is you want it! (...) What you need, you'll die without it!" "Tigers sometimes hunt for fun instead of their food, but lions don't hunt for their fun" (Then we asked him to elaborate) "Solo animals don't have any friends to play with, so... They hunt."

"Why do we put animals on the morality spectrum?"
Staff 1: "Trying to apply... um, morality to animals is really just humans trying to understand the world around them by applying human principles." (Following up on that, we asked him if that is a good thing) "Depends on what the goal is", "If we're putting morality on for... Um, to try and understand, um, why a certain animal would do something, erm, in a certain situation then potentially?" "But if it's purely just to apply human thinking to how animals operate then I don't think it's right."

Student 1 and 2 are interviewed together:
Student 2: "Cause we our own have our own moralities", "Everyone has their own sense of justice" (We inquired if our judgement of whether an animal is "good" or "bad" depends on our sense of justice) "Yeah."
(We asked them if judging like that is good)
Student 1: "I think depends on the animal", "Maybe animals that eat stuff, eat other animals for no reason. That's not good."

"How do we implement animal rights protection laws effectively?"
Staff 2: "Public education and also you need to charge the fee for people who violate the law, like the government needs to, you know, pay attention in the execution", "We need the people actually on board for the execution of the law".

Teacher 3: "I think the key is flexibility, working with emotions but strategic plan? And not letting- Letting emotions drive you without clouding your judgement", "Of course, educating the general public on everything is great. Yeah, I mean reduction of, like, factory farming whether that's through educating farmers", "better infrastructure that allows for more sustainable methods of plant-based eating".

"Would you rather be a wolf or a sheep?"

Teacher 2: "Probably a wolf, um.... I think... I don't know; I think the connotation of a sheep is that it's... It's to conform all the time, and that even means that you're living in a farm or you're vulnerable to attack if you're living in the wilds", "Wolves I guess then they have more agency over themselves".

Teacher 3: "Maybe a wolf, I think, but mainly because, um, studies show that wolves have a higher level of like consciousness" (Based on the answer, we questioned if being more aware of dangers around you is better or not) "Yeah it might be quite nice to be a sheep, no worries in a field".

Staff 1: "If I was in Scotland, where I'm from, love to be a sheep - It's class; you just go around eating grass. There's no real predator; there's no actual predator really, erm, and sometimes a dog comes along to push you into like a wee- wee cage and you know you don't have to think about anything", "If I was somewhere else where, uh, there were predators that could easily get me, um, then I would probably consider being a wolf". "I'd rather be able to chase what I need to survive, rather than be surviving and be scared of my environment".

"If humans went extinct tomorrow, what other animal do you think would take over the world and how?"

Student 1: "I think it's ants", "cause they're everywhere, and like I don't think lions can eat them", "They'll keep producing".
Student 2: "I think rats", "They have a large population, so much that like I think in the UK, uh... The sewers are packed with them".

Teacher 4: "Like a rat, something that is going to survive no matter what, pretty intelligent, like... Yeah, can work in a pack", They would play the long game; they wouldn't be stressed - they'd wait for all the other animals to kind of fight each other, kill each other and then they'd just come in".

Teacher 1: "I don't think animals would take over the world; it goes back to your morality question, right? They don't have that hierarchical structure and... That people have. Animals don't want to be a billionaire or president" (We then reframed the question to what animal is the most dominant in the food web) "The world's going to be flooded, cause of the ice caps melting anyway, so the killer whales would just be everywhere".

12

The Effect of Adaptation on Species

Written by: Minchan Kim Y7
Designed by: Thai Anh Hoang Y13

Have you ever wondered what adaptations are? Adaptations are changes in an organism's body or behavior that help it survive. These changes often take thousands of years to occur. Adaptations are important because they help animals get food, run away from predators, and survive in harsh environments.

Adaptations help animals survive by allowing them to fit in with their environment, for example through camouflage. One great example of camouflage is the grasshopper. This is because green grasshoppers camouflage with grass and leaves very well. It shows that camouflaging increases organisms' chances of survival. Another example of an adaptation is the penguin, which has adapted flippers instead of wings for swimming underwater. Here, the flippers are more useful for escaping underwater predators. Therefore, I think adaptations hugely help animals survive.

On the other hand, I think human causes animals to lose survival skills. An example of this situation is the pelicans. Lakes in modern cities may seem like nothing to us, but for some birds it's their habitat. Sometimes, pelicans inhabiting the lakes are used to humans. They were not aggressive at all and most importantly, they relied on humans for food. This made them forget how to hunt naturally because people fed the pelicans. This is a huge problem. Due to this reason, I believe human causes animals to lose survival skills.

Adaptations are great. Adaptations help organisms (in this article I talked about animals specifically) survive by allowing them to fit in with their environment. However, humans can cause animals to lose survival skills. Therefore, I think humans need to think about every action they do and how it can affect any animal. Thank you.

Grasshopper

Penguin

Pelicans

The Animal Right

The Opinion Column: Opinion from a Y7 writer

Written by: Soohyun Choi Y7
Designed by: Thai Anh Hoang Y13

According to Wikipedia (2019), animal rights is the belief that "many or all sentient animals" have "moral worth" regardless of how useful they are for humans.

I think animal rights is very important for animals and a freedom they should have, so they don't get hurt because of humans.

However, animal rights are not always good at protecting them. I think in some places the law can be loose. This is because I read that last time one man who killed 30 dogs only went to jail for 1 year. Also, I think some countries made better laws than others.

One day when these problems are solved, animals will have more rights. I hope animals get a better life one day
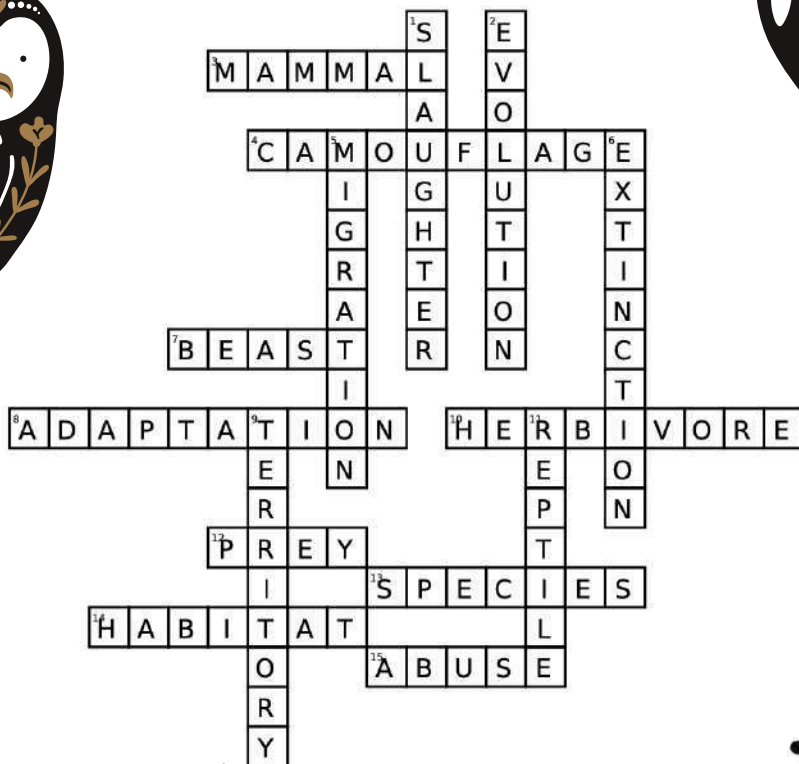
Animal Crossword
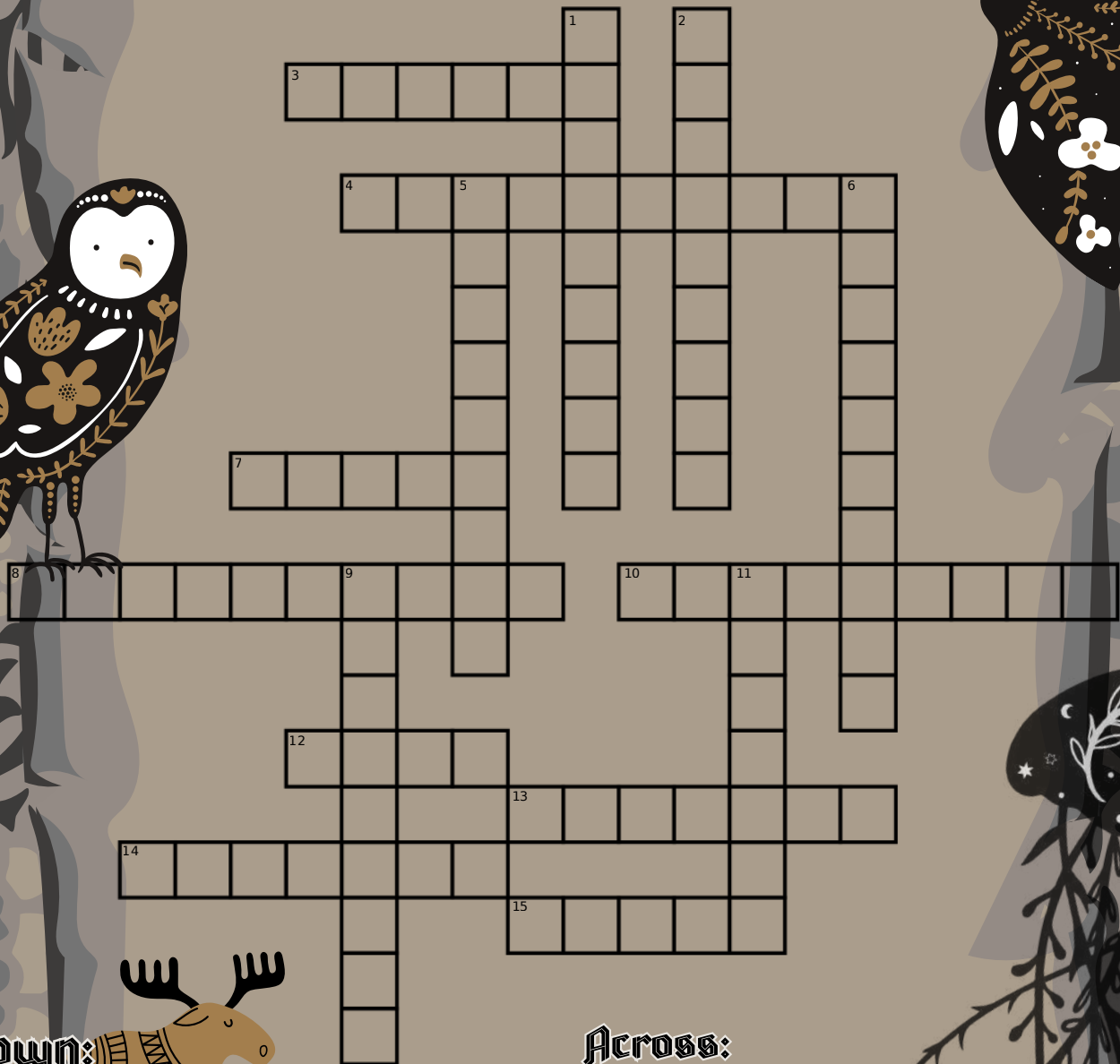
Down:

1 The killing of animals cruelly and unfairly
2 The way in which populations of living things change and develop
5 The regular movement of animals to and from a place
6 When no members of a species exist
9 An area defended by organisms
11 An animal that lays eggs and uses the sun's heat to regulate body temperature

Across:

3 Any animal of which the female feed her young with milk from her own body
4 When an animal's colours, patterns, or shapes help it blend into its environment
7 A wild or dangerous animal
8 The process of changing to suit different conditions
10 Animals that eat plants
12 Animals that are hunted and killed by other animals
13 A group of living beings
14 The natural environment of an organism
15 To use something for the wrong purpose in a way that is harmful

Animal Crossword

How did you do?

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     1M A M M A L       V
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     4C A M O U F L A G E 6E
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Answers

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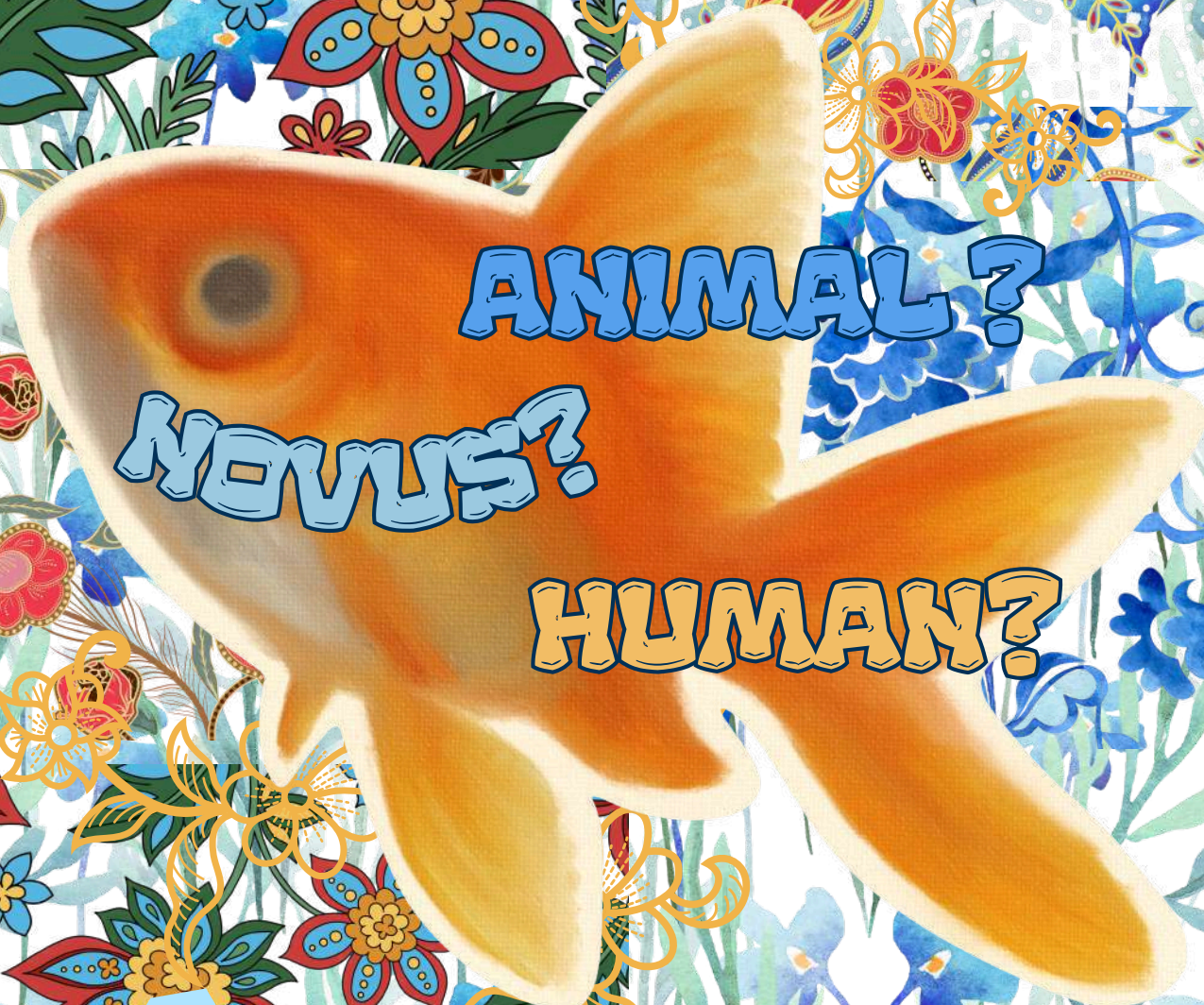Thai Anh Hoang Y13 (Front cover, Editorial, Contents, Theme Interviews, Crossword, Back cover)

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