

TOOLKIT

THIRTEEN WAYS OF LOOKING

Introduce your students to the poem Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird by American Poet Wallace Stevens. In his poem Stevens uses thirteen short and separate sections that mention the blackbird in different ways.

Each section evokes a feeling where “the thirteen word-pictures are a whole study of identity and promote the idea that a creature seemingly simple, a common blackbird, is anything but, because at a given instant perception alters, depending on the physical environment, the action of the bird and the effect on the mind of the perceiver.”

On your field trip, ask the students to pick an object from that place and consider thirteen ways to explore the identity of the object and place.

Review the images and discuss with your students how these objects capture a portrait of a place.

Thirteen Ways of Looking at a Blackbird by Wallace Stevens

I

Among twenty snowy mountains,
The only moving thing
Was the eye of the blackbird.

II

I was of three minds,
Like a tree
In which there are three blackbirds.

III

The blackbird whirled in the autumn winds.
It was a small part of the pantomime.