



Photo Courtesy of Ella Williams

“train”

from *Early Winter Songs from Middle America*

ELLA WILLIAMS

“train,” as well as other songs from her debut album, can be found [here](#).

Ella Williams is a first-year from Boston, MA. She attends Grinnell College and is currently spending her time on developing her first album.

Ella writes:

In its entirety, it's sort of an ode to the prairie and to the way the stark landscape has the power to fundamentally change one's perspective of the world, and of oneself. The union pacific train had this effect on me and was the subject of endless reflection.

What had this train seen? What other small communities in and beyond the prairie had this train lovingly infiltrated? I wanted to recreate the sounds of the train and embody the mystery of it, by writing “train.” Overall, each song isn't much on its own. They're all pieces that together tell the story of my time in Iowa—from the landscape, to the people I met, and ultimately to the decision to take a semester off to record the album.



A Reflection

BY CHLOE WILLIAMS

Listening to the album *Early Winter Songs From Middle America* under the sun on a spring afternoon in Iowa actually made me wish it were snowing a little. This album is the perfect companion to a quiet afternoon spent settling into a comfy chair with a hot drink and a good novel. Williams crafts a wistful blend of sounds, relying on finger-picked electric guitar lines that reverb seamlessly with the loop pedal-generated melodies. These techniques give her songs an uncanny feel, reminiscent of the prairie after a heavy snowfall. Her lyrics and tone remind the listener of the ephemeral quality of not just the winter, but of life itself. One of my favorite tracks is “i'll go now,” featuring vocal loops with intermittent guitar, which results

in an expansive, echoing chorus that is both hopeful and haunting. Her song “train” was particularly influenced by Grinnell, a town bordered by Iowa's prairie and criss-crossed by train tracks. At times, Williams' voice echoes the whistle of a train, a sound common to those up late into the Grinnell night. Though the train route is no longer part of the lifeblood of the town, freight vcars continue to rumble through Grinnell. And as the song's chorus reminds us: that's just the way it goes. No doubt, *Early Winter Songs* is worth the \$7 you'll part with to own a piece of the ephemeral, if only for a moment.