

**Let's Talk About It: Picturing America  
Making Tracks**

**Poetry Selections**

**“January Chance” by Mark Van Doren**

All afternoon before them, father and boy,  
In a plush well, with winter sounding past:  
In the warm cubicle between two high  
Seat backs that slumber, voyaging the vast.  
All afternoon to open the deep things  
That long have waited, suitably unsaid.

Now one of them is older, and the other's  
Art at last has audience; has head,  
Has heart to take it in. It is the time.

Begin, says winter, howling through the pane.  
Begin, the seat back bumps: what safer hour  
Than this, within the somnolent loud train,  
A prison where the corridors slide on  
As the walls creak, remembering downgrade?  
Begin. But with a smile the father slumps  
And sleeps. And so the man is never made.

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