

# SF

SF stood for Sigmund Freud, or serious folly,  
for science fiction in San Francisco, or fear  
in the south of France. The system failed.  
The siblings fought. So far, such fury,  
as if a funereal sequence of sharps and flats  
set free a flamboyant signature, sinful, fanatic,  
the fire sermon of a secular fundamentalist,  
a singular fellow's Symphonie Fantastique.

Students forget the state's favorite son's face.  
Sorry, friends, for the screws of fate.  
Stage fright seduces the faithful for the subway fare  
as slobs fake sobs, suckers flee, salesmen fade.  
Sad the fops. Sudden the flip side of fame.  
So find the segue. Finish the speculative frame.

--David Lehman

## Journal prompts:

- SF stands for silly fun with poetry. Take two letters -- maybe your initials? -- and make two lists of juicy words. Then combine the words into phrases, or leave them solo but nudged against each other. Simply fantastic!
- Write about a time when language was fun -- when you played with words and sound.

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## **Valentine for Ernest Mann**

You can't order a poem like you order a taco.  
Walk up to the counter, say, "I'll take two"  
and expect it to be handed back to you  
on a shiny plate.

Still, I like your spirit.  
Anyone who says, "Here's my address,  
write me a poem," deserves something in reply.  
So I'll tell you a secret instead:  
poems hide. In the bottoms of our shoes,  
they are sleeping. They are the shadows  
drifting across our ceilings the moment  
before we wake up. What we have to do  
is live in a way that lets us find them.

Once I knew a man who gave his wife  
two skunks for a valentine.  
He couldn't understand why she was crying.  
"I thought they had such beautiful eyes."  
And he was serious. He was a serious man  
who lived in a serious way. Nothing was ugly  
just because the world said so. He really  
liked those skunks. So, he reinvented them  
as valentines and they became beautiful.  
At least, to him. And the poems that had been hiding  
in the eyes of the skunks for centuries  
crawled out and curled up at his feet.

Maybe if we reinvent whatever our lives give us  
we find poems. Check your garage, the odd sock  
in your drawer, the person you almost like, but not quite.  
And let me know.

- Naomi Shihab Nye  
in *The Red Suitcase*, Brockport, NY: BOA Editions, 1994.

### **Journal prompts:**

- Write about an unusual gift you've given, or received.
- Write about a time you reinvented something your life gave you.
- Where do your poems hide?



