Fundamentalism

By Naomi Shihab Nye

Because the eye has a short shadow or
it is hard to see over heads in the crowd?

If everyone else seems smarter
but you need your own secret?

If mystery was never your friend?

If one way could satisfy
the infinite heart of the heavens?

If you liked the king on his golden throne
more than the villagers carrying baskets of lemons?

If you wanted to be sure
his guards would admit you to the party?

The boy with the broken pencil
scrapes his little knife against the lead
turning and turning it as a point
emerges from the wood again

If he would believe his life is like that
he would not follow his father into war


Source: Fuel (BOA Editions Ltd., 1998)