

The next poem you will read begins with a simple comparison but then develops a rather complicated, **extended metaphor**. Read “Marshall” by George Macbeth, writing your questions and comments about the metaphor in the **Response Notes** column.



## Marshall by George Macbeth

It occurred to Marshall  
that if he were a vegetable, he'd  
be a bean. Not  
one of your thin, stringy  
green beans, or your

dry, marbly  
Burlotti beans. No, he'd be  
a broad bean,  
a rich, nutritious,  
meaningful bean,

alert for advantages,  
inquisitive with potatoes,  
mixing with every kind  
and condition of vegetable,  
and a good friend

to meat and lager. Yes, he'd  
leap from his huge  
rough pod with a loud  
popping sound  
into the pot: always

in hot water  
and out of it with a soft  
heart inside  
his horny carapace. He'd  
carry the whole

world's hunger on  
his broad shoulders, green  
with best butter  
or brown with gravy. And if ►

Response  
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some starving Indian saw his  
flesh bleeding  
when the gas was turned on  
or the knife went in  
he'd accept the homage and prayers,  
and become a god, and die like a man,  
which, as things were, wasn't so easy. ❖

### COMMENTARY FROM GEORGE MACBETH

Here's what George Macbeth said about his poem "Marshall" when asked for a brief commentary:

It's a funny poem that turns serious, and the first of a number of rather surrealist vegetable pieces I've done—a recent sequence of twenty-four includes, for example, "The Great Crested Cucumber" and "The Vampire Marrow" (i.e., vegetables as macabre animals you wouldn't like to meet in a dark restaurant). The Aztecs, of course, thought beans were alive because they seemed to bleed to death in hot water.

Notice that the entire poem is based on a single comparison of Marshall, the main character of the poem, to a bean. Macbeth develops the metaphor by first saying what kind of bean Marshall is not and then going on to develop the kind of bean that he is. About halfway through the poem, he moves from an extended **description** of character qualities to the kinds of action he would take. ("Yes, he'd / leap from his huge rough pod . . .")

By the end of the poem, you should have a good idea of Marshall's character, conveyed through the extended metaphor of Marshall as a bean.

### DISCUSSING MARSHALL AND PLANNING YOUR POEM

- ❖ Talk about "Marshall" with a partner or a group. Look at your annotations and raise questions and ideas that you wrote in your **Response Notes**. Then discuss the kinds of vegetables you might be.
- ❖ Make a list of vegetables and some of their characteristics:
  - What kinds of people would they be?
  - What would they look like as people?
  - What would they act like?

- ✱ Jot down at least two or three vegetables before you decide which one will become the basis of your poem.

Kinds of vegetables	Characteristics: descriptions and actions that this veggie-character might take

- ✱ Choose one of the vegetables of your poem. Give the vegetable a name. (It doesn't have to represent you, although you might want it to.) Then, following the general format of "Marshall," draft your poem. It might begin like this:

It occurred to [the name of your character]  
that if [she/he] were a vegetable, [she'd/he'd]  
be [name of your vegetable]. Not  
one of your . . .

- ✱ Use this space for your notes. You may wish to work with a partner to revise it. Remember to develop your character both through description and action. Use your own paper to develop your poem.

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- ✱ Make a clean, edited copy of your poem when you are finished.

How can the use of metaphor enhance character development?