**Question #2:** Pay attention to the start of the passage from l.1 (: “The thing was…”) to l.5 : “It really was.” Does a baseball mitt sound like a “very descriptive” subject to you? Pay attention to the way the narrator introduces this topic. Remember to focus on the writing. What do you make of the first two sentences? Again, pay attention to the writing. Can you connect to other parts of the passage? To some elements of the plot?

* ***J’ai mis en gras les mots, tournures et expressions qui peuvent vous être utiles pour rédiger vos propres réponses. Notez-les et apprenez-les !***

**First of all**, Holden’s introduction of his choice of topic is **indeed** surprising, as a baseball mitt is not exactly the most “descriptive” subject for a writer. A house or a room do seem like more appropriate focus points for a description. The narrator’s **insistence on** the quality of his subject with the phrase “It really was” (l.5) can **suggest** an awareness of the strangeness of that choice and **can also be read as** a sign of his delight in the evocation of something **connected with** his brother.

The **rejection of** the original topic of the house in the first two sentences is surprising **though**. Why did Holden agree to do the assignment then? **Besides,** the second sentence (“I’m not…anyway.” l.2-3) is surprising because **the use of** the present tense makes it sound like he is describing a habit of his—**as if** writing about houses and rooms **was** a common activity for him, which of course **sounds absurd**. Holden often uses these strange generalisations of very specific situations and this one is **first and foremost** comic for the reader—it creates a knowing, serious tone which seems inappropriate in this context.

But there are **other ways of reading** it. **At the end** of the passage, Holden **tells us about** the time of his brother’s death and the fact that he broke the windows of the house before choosing to sleep in the garage and not the house (l.32-35). This is interesting since the house—the home—is often **synonymous with** the family. Holden’s rejection and destruction of the family home at the end can easily be connected with **his refusal to** describe a house or a room in the assignment. **In both cases**, it **can be seen as** a rejection of personal stories and emotions connected to the family.

**On top of that**, we know that Holden has been sent away from home to a boarding school and **the one scene where** we see him at home involves him hiding and then running away from his parents in order to try and reconnect with his sister. Again, refusing to describe a house is **significant** in that context—it **emphasizes** Holden’s **sense of** exclusion and estrangement from his own home.

***La partie qui suit n’était pas véritablement appelée par la question, mais je l’inclus car nous avons commencé à en parler en classe :***

**What is also interesting** in this passage is that the choice of the mitt is, **on the face of it**, a less personal one, while the house or the bedroom are, by definition, more personal topics. **Yet** Holden’s choice is **indeed** extremely personal since it is his brother’s personalized mitt. **So that** an apparently anonymous object is invested with a lot of personal meaning while a normally personal space is **rejected as** an appropriate topic for writing.

This reversal has **a metafictional value**. **Firstly**, this passage is **in itself** metafictional since Holden, the narrator and figure of the author in the novel, is telling us about writing. But **it goes much beyond that**—what Holden admires about his brother’s glove is the fact that he had written poems on it. This detail **invites a metafictional reading**: Allie, like D.B., is presented and admired *as a writer*. The fact that he wrote directly on the mitt, **i.e.** a real, physical object—a fact that Holden is clearly **fascinated with**—can be understood as **a reflection of** Holden’s own desire as a narrator to stick to the real and avoid the personal. **In a sense**, Holden’s **evocation of** his brother’s death can also be read as a way of claiming his own identity as a writer.