Model Claims:

Because Amir’s own first person account repeatedly reveals his certainty that he alone is responsible for Assef’s savage assault on Hassan, readers can be deluded into thinking Amir’s self-blame and guilt are justified. Further exploration of the environmental and societal influences on Amir are proof, however, that Amir is bearing a burden that must be shared by others who are equally as guilty. Though Amir must assume personal responsibility for his cruel behavior towards Hassan, he is not only wrong to assume the full blame for his inability to rescue Hassan from Assef, but he is also wrong to accept full blame for saying nothing about the rape to either Baba or Hassan, himself.

Though Daisy and Gatsby come from two extraordinarily diverse backgrounds and do not have the experience to understand the world of the other, they have each been seduced by the same powerful and oppressive cultural experiences. Daisy, a woman of family wealth and social status, is beholden, over all else, to the values of the closed, privileged society that have shaped her from birth. Gatsby, an outsider to such privilege is, likewise, beholden to those same values—values which breathed into him the belief he was nothing without wealth and status. Both Daisy’s and Gatsby’s fierce allegiance to the dictates of the social elite prevents them from having the courage to resist the allure of such a distorted value system. As different as they are, they each believe they must choose the society of the rich over a life of authenticity, and, thus, they doom themselves to live meaningless lives bereft of love.

 Holden’s first person account of his rebellious behavior often suggests that Holden is cynical, unmotivated, and without direction. In reality, however, his actions and attitudes are both a result of his grief over his brother’s death and his unmet desire that the adults and peers in his life understand it and offer empathetic support.

Because H. feels so much pain from the death of his brother, Allie, he goes to great lengths to distance himself from others. Such effort at keeping his authentic self hidden from both adults and peers results from his fear that he might hurt even more if he loses again someone he cares for in the same way he cared for Allie. Thus, he makes no effort to form the close, authentic relationships that would heal him and, instead, maintains a false persona that, sadly, makes him more isolated and alone.

 At first, Holden’s consistently rebellious thoughts and behavior appear to demonstrate a complete indifference to his own academic success and, likewise, show him to have little patience or respect for his peers, most of whom he sees as phonies or perverts. His criticism of almost every aspect of his life, combined with his lies and irresponsible behavior, do not seem to make him a candidate for sympathy.  Holden, however, is actually quite deserving of sympathy and compassionate intervention, for his real motivation for acting the way he does—even though he himself is mostly unconscious of it—is his grief over his brother’s death and the disconnection he feels from those around him.  Sadly, this grief, combined with his unawareness of how much his grief causes him to feel isolated and alone, is what compels him to make self-destructive choices that further distance him from the meaningful, human connection he craves. Despite his self-destructive behavior, however, Holden’s perpetual feelings of loneliness and isolation motivate Holden to wish for a world where he can be a catcher in the rye; he wants to be the one to catch children before they fall into a world of suffering like himself.

J. D. Salinger’s *Catcher….* is told from the perspective of H. Caulfield, a temporary resident in a mental hospital. As H. shares his recent experiences and actions, even he suggests that he has been childish, unmotivated, and dishonest. Yet, closer evaluation shows that what appears to be immaturity or lack of concern is really H’s misguided efforts to cope with the death of his younger brother, Allie. Holden’s repressed grief leaves him continually searching for meaningful connection with others; he unconsciously hopes to replace the pain he feels from such palpable loss with relationship that will have the depth and love he had with his brother. Because Holden, however, tries to achieve authentic connection in settings where such connection is usually impossible, Holden makes even worse his own isolation and loneliness by criticizing all who cannot provide him with the antidote to his pain.