Your responses to the following assignment:

1. Imagine yourself at a movie that you are thoroughly enjoying, being completely intent on that movie. Or imagine yourself reading something very enjoyable and not very challenging, something like a Stephen King or an Elmore Leonard, a detective story, or a science-fiction novel. Write a description of your state of mind, using at least 15 words.

I fear that, because of my course description and other writings to which you’ve been exposed, your answers may reflect your wish to give me what I want to hear rather than a fresh, unbiased description. Oh well. Not much I can do about that now. I have boldfaced phrasings that bear on the willing suspension of disbelief.

1. I am paying attention to the characters and wondering what will happen next. I am suspenseful or happy or sad when things happen to these characters.

2. When grossly involved in following the continuance of a plot in literature, poetry or film I find myself ‘emotionally’ influenced in various aspects dependent upon situation and context, as well as subject matter and medium. For instance, I am particularly fond of European and Latin American film in subtitle form. When I was first introduced to this medium while watching the movie “Fat Girl” (À ma soeur), I became somewhat neutral and contemplative, yet at the same time felt emotions of nostalgia and anxiety in my ongoing associations with the characters. In my attempt to understand and sympathize with those characters I absorbed through the aesthetic and psychological triggers (soundtrack, use of color, design of key elements on the set) a sense of such emotions as the characters seem to fell. While the after effect of watching the film was a sense of remorse and bemusement I recognized my distinction from the characters though I attempted to draw parallels to my own life and social interactions.

3. When I am reading Harry Potter, I feel as if I am inside the book, there with the characters as the events of the plot unfold. I can see everything happening inside my mind. When something exciting is about to happen, I anticipate and eagerly await the next page. I can forget everything in the real world while I am within the fantasy world of the novel.

4. Taken over is what comes to mind when I think about how I feel once I snap out of it. The “it” being something along the lines of a spell or a trance, like I’ve lost sense of place and self.

5. This Sunday I went to the movie theater with my mother to see Phantom of the Opera, which was by the way fabulously rendered-every bit as beautiful and moving as the Broadway production. In any event, while I was sitting in the theater, four rows from the screen and surrounded by digitally-mastered delight, I was entranced by this movie. I felt myself young and naive, as Christine is, longing for love, acceptance, and my father's affection, willing to succumb to the will of another. I felt pained when a flashback was shown of the abuse the Phantom endured as a child, because of his mauled face-I literally became nauseated by the cruelty and thereafter forgave him his own anger, cruelty, and violence toward others. I was so engrossed by the cinematic wonder, that when my
mother reached over to hand me a Hersheys bar, I jumped. I had forgotten that she was there, more importantly I had forgotten that I was there. If I acknowledged myself at all during that two and half hour span it was only out of empathy for the sad state of the characters on screen.

6. *I seem to forget about myself and put myself in the minds of the characters* in the novel or the movie. I think my reading or viewing of a book or movie that I truly enjoy is less active than my reading or viewing of a book or movie that is complex or unenjoyable. Instead of actively interpreting the text by impressing upon it my history, opinions, etc, I *passively enter the text, forgetting myself and emotionally reacting to the characters' situation(s).*

7. 1: I'm completely absorbed, intently focused on what I'm viewing or reading, often anxious to see what happens next. I tend to ignore external or interfering stimuli, and find myself feeling personally invested in the outcome.

8. In this case, *my mind would be completely captivated* by the storyline and characters, as though I existed within the plot. Most often, I fail to acknowledge the reality I am truly a part of, leading me to cry if a character dies or become frightened if a character is threatened. Regardless, a truly enjoyable book/movie enables me to ignore my actual life and live within someone else’s for a short while.

9. 1) When I'm doing easy, enjoyable reading, I lose track of time quickly. Literary and plot devices stand out to me because I really appreciate them, and I get so engrossed that I feel a bit dazed when I stop reading. This is why I don't put a good book down until I'm tired and ready for bed.

10. My eyes move over the words fairly quick, and I feel as if the words create one long thought, despite punctuation and chapter separations. I don’t think of any of the words as crucially significant, they all work together as one entity to convey a plot, not thought-provoking individual elements of the narrative. I can usually make my own associations with the text while reading and still keep up with the progression of the plot.

11. I am feeling engrossed, curious as to what will happen next, as if the events were happening to me. If the text is scary or suspenseful I feel anxious deep down in my stomach and my heart starts to pound. If something disturbing happens I tend to feel queasy or physically disturbed.

12. I have never read Stephen King or Elmore Leonard but I thoroughly enjoy the novels by Minette Walters and I can describe what I feel when I read her books. While reading her mystery books I am obviously trying to figure out who killed the victim and why. I am puzzled by the grossness of the crime and wondering why would someone kill the victim so brutally. And I must admit that
although I am horrified by these crimes but I also like watching criminals being caught. And maybe that explains why I am such a fan of CSI and Monk.

13. I read quickly and easily through the pages, and my mind disregards the external environment as I become more and more immersed in the novel with the turn of each page. The act of reading is an unconscious effort. My mind temporarily forgets its own sense of self and is consumed with the lives of the novel’s characters. I laugh and I cry, truly feeling the triumphs and failures of the characters.

14. I’m easily taken in. Not in the sense that I feel a part of whatever world it is that I am watching or reading, but more like I don’t exist or at least I am out of the equation for the moment, and the only thing there really is, is whatever there is in the movie. Afterwards I find or rather notice the underlying themes, “meaning,” symbols, etc. evident in the film. What I mean is those that take deeper analysis, not tricks or twists relevant to the plot. I am taken in, in the sense that my attention is absolved. But it is still a relatively superficial level of consciousness that I am giving the film....relative to the thought I could and/or will put into it after the experience, or upon a second viewing.

15. I am absorbed in the movie/book without much effort. I completely lose track of time and my surroundings. Sometimes I feel as if I am in the story.

16. My attention is aroused, and I am actively participating in the narrative. I can imagine myself alongside the characters, but it is rarely necessary for me to stop reading in order to incorporate myself into the story.

17. Reading ?pulp fiction? or viewing an enjoyable film (absent of bad acting and casting which break the believable world, for me, by allowing the emergence of cynicism and an influx of face recognition associations, respectively) are socially expectable escapist endeavors. Tabooed pharmacological escape routes are known for their ability to place people in a state of susceptibility to hallucinations: experiences that have been coined ?not real? and are therefore assigned to sociopaths. Dreaming, which generates similar imagery, has not been branded stigmata, for the most part, because it is assumed that a healthy individual can discriminate their dreams from reality in their waking hours and is therefore not vulnerable to their nighttime hallucinations and, of course, because dreams are unavoidable. Somehow, escapist art has managed to elude social scrutiny, though for me it elicits a susceptibility to imagery that the masses deem ?not real?. When cozied up in a movie seat, or reading chair, experiencing plot driven ?unchallenging? art, I snap into the same state of mind that overtakes me during my vivid dream life.

     Usually, my dreams are perceived in an intermediary omniscience: I witness myself from the outside, yet feel empathy for my casted character more so than with the other viewed (hallucinated?) forms. Similarly, I adopt the emotions of fictional/artful protagonists.

     Most of the while, I believe the florid scenarios of my dreams to be real, though my actual coordinate is mapped to my bed. My body, too during the nighttime hours, empathizes with my elaborate mental constructs. This I know because I often wake up sweaty and adrenaline rushed
during an action sequence, or even sexually aroused in the midst of a romantically idealized mental choreography. With all things equal, I would be deemed a nocturnal sociopath. Yet, I am not ostracized when I fall from real time and space, into the imaginary world of art, actively followed by my sympathetic nervous system. Nobody has ever attempted to handcuff my sweaty palms outside of Regal Cinema.

Note themes:

A. Unawareness of self or surroundings.
B. Feeling emotions of characters / "identification."
C. Sense of merger with the movie. (Occasional oral imagery.)
D. Contrast between this state of mind and thinking / interpreting. Contrast between during and after the movie.