

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept **THE** definitive answer. This week it's Channel 4 News's **Jon Snow**



'I paint a watercolour picture almost everywhere I go – the beauty is that you can't guarantee what will happen'

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My Condor bicycle, which I've had for six years. They cost around £2,000, but I cycle to work every day so it paid for itself within a year.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Letting my music and singing slip. I was a chorister as a child and used to be quite good on the piano and violin.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Fresh bread, croissants, cinnamon swirls, pains aux raisins – they're so fattening, but so irresistibly delicious.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Team Of Rivals: The Political Genius Of Abraham Lincoln by Doris Kearns Goodwin. It's an account of how he persuaded men who hated him to work with him.

**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Man for a day...** I'd spend a day with Barack Obama to find out what he really believes. I think he's actually much more radical than he's been as President.

Right: Julie Christie in Doctor Zhivago. Above right: watercolour paints. Far right: the Scottish island of Iona



**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...**

Painting in watercolours. I paint one almost everywhere I go. The beauty is you can't guarantee what will happen, so they constantly surprise you.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Hatred of those who are perceived as different.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Doctor Zhivago, which I saw as a teenager. The beautiful Julie Christie, the great Omar Sharif, the Russian steppes, the snow... wonderful.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My cousin Peter Snow is a great journalist – I try to emulate him.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** The search for the truth. I'll keep asking questions until I find it, but on a scale from one to ten I haven't even got to one!

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd steal the minute hand from Big Ben just for the fun of it.



**The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint...**

William Wilberforce, who abolished slavery in the British Empire. I'd ask him how he did it.

**The piece of wisdom that you would pass on to a child...** Always look for the funny side. I manage to laugh a lot, even in difficult times – in every cloud there's a funny lining!

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...** The view of Balcombe Viaduct from my childhood bedroom in Ardingly, West Sussex. Its 37 arches were the horizon of my world and a source of wonderment.

**The poem that touches your soul...** JK Rowling's remarkable Commencement Address to Harvard University students on 5 June 2008 is lyrical and highly emotive – it stirs my heart as much as any poem and inspires me to do better.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm the Game Of Thrones character played by Kit Harington. The epithet connected to him – 'You know nothing, Jon Snow' – follows me everywhere.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Doing a year's voluntary work as a teacher in Uganda when I was 18. I'd never been on a plane or left England. The experience transformed me from a selfish, privileged boy into someone with a conscience.

**The song that means most to you...** I Believe I Can Fly by R Kelly – it's aspirational, absurd and speaks of more self-belief than I possess.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** The day would begin with my wife Precious on the island of Iona off the west coast of Scotland, where I'd have breakfast at the Argyll Hotel. I have porridge every day with fresh fruit, nuts and honey, followed by coffee. I'd then settle down to paint a watercolour of the rocky outcrops and the rolling sea.

Later we'd head to Cape Cod in the USA for a lunch of oysters and lobster. After that I'd swim in one of the spell-binding glacial kettle ponds there. We'd spend the rest of the day on one of the heavenly islands off Mozambique, diving and snorkelling. At sundown we'd have

a barbecue on the beach. Then we'd find some hammocks and sleep under a full moon to the sound of the waves.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** Nothing beats the births of my daughters [Leila, 32, and Freya, 29, from his previous relationship], but getting the BAFTA Fellowship last year is as good as it gets in my profession. It's amazing to get that sort of acclamation from your peers – and still be alive!

**The saddest time that shook your world...** 9/11. I've since covered Afghanistan, Iraq and Syria and its scar is constantly visible. I think everybody has been affected by that day.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To render the New Horizon Youth Centre charity for homeless young people, which I have chaired for 30 years, redundant.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Treat people well and they will treat you well in return.

**The order of service at your funeral...** It must be very short because I don't want to inflict any bother on those who have to get rid of me. I believe that once you're dead, you're gone, so none of the funeral stuff really matters.

**The way you want to be remembered...** He did his best.

**The Plug...** Channel 4 News is serious, comic and informs in its own unique way. It belongs to us all, but costs nothing, and is worth preserving. Watch it Monday-Friday at 7pm. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



## PS...

Helen Mirren goes back to Hollywood's golden age in *Trumbo* – in cinemas Friday. Neil Pearson stars in comedy *Hand To God* at London's Vaudeville Theatre, also from Friday, and Elton John's new album *Wonderful Crazy Night* is out on the same day



## NEXT WEEK

- Behind the scenes on the BBC's hard-hitting new adoption drama *One Child*
- Tuck into our tasty new series on brilliant breakfasts
- Monty Don says hallelujah for hyacinths
- PLUS Britain's best TV guide