



'My ultimate ambition was to become prime minister – but I was a failure at politics!'

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

*We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week it's the turn of author Jeffrey Archer*

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

Thomas Jefferson, principal author of the Declaration of Independence. I'd love to discuss the drafting of it and how it has affected his country down the years. **The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Never judge anyone by their looks. You'll be fooled again and again. **The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Auctions. I like to sit at the back and watch the drama unfold.

**The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again...**

A Moorcroft vase which shattered during transit ten years ago. It'd be worth £100,000 today. The hardest part was telling Mary! **The unending quest that drives you on...** To make each book better than the last. **The poem that touches your soul...** I'm inspired by a speech by former US president Theodore Roosevelt in which he talks about the man who tries, but fails 'while daring greatly'.

As told to Rob McGibbon

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** People assume I'm cynical, but I'm an enthusiast and can be incredibly naive.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Going to prison [he was jailed for four years in 2001 for perjury and perverting the course of justice]. It made me more aware of other people's problems and how lucky I am.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd steal Caravaggio's Entombment Of Christ painting from the Vatican, then hang it in the National Gallery in London.

**The song that means most to you...**

I Want To Hold Your Hand by The Beatles. It was at No 1 in 1963 when I met Mary at Oxford and we had our first dance to it. It always reminds me of her and such fun times.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** Running the 100 yards for Oxford at the Canadian Open Championships in Toronto in 1966. I came second, but ran my fastest time ever – 9.6 seconds – which was exhilarating.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** I lost everything in 1974 after investing £500,000 in a fraudulent Canadian company, Aquablast. I was 34 and facing ruin, but I started writing and paid off my debts within seven years.

**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To have been prime minister, but I was a failure at politics! **The philosophy that underpins your life...** There's no short cut to success.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I'm a traditionalist, so it will be a Christian service with hymns such as To Be A Pilgrim and Jerusalem and readings by my sons and friends. Mary would be in charge, so it would run on time!

**The way you want to be remembered...** As generous and loyal and as a shanachie – that's Irish for 'storyteller'. **The Plug...** Best Kept Secret, the third instalment in my Clifton Chronicles series, is published in paperback by Macmillan on Thursday, £7.99, www.jeffreyarcher.co.uk. ■

**The prized possession you value above all others...** A marble Victorian clock left to me by my mother Lola when she died in 2001. It's my link with the past.

**The unqualified regret you wish you could amend...** That I didn't have three daughters! I have two lovely sons [William, 40, and James, 38] and a grandson [William's boy Alexander, seven months] but to walk a daughter down the aisle must be truly special.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...**

I'd have breakfast at London's Connaught Hotel with the actress Annette Bening. I've never met her, but she's beautiful and bright and I'm sure she'd be great company. I'd have melon, cornflakes and scrambled eggs. After that, I'd arrive at a private box at Lord's to watch England bat against Australia and host a lunch with former captains. In the afternoon I'd meet my wife Mary for a matinée at the National Theatre, and then we'd head to the Hermitage museum in St Petersburg to see the great Russian paintings and Fabergé eggs. In the evening I'd conduct an auction at The Dorchester hotel and raise £2m for the Make-A-Wish Foundation. I'd end the day in Weston-super-Mare with dinner at Coffins, the best fish and chip shop in the world.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Affogato – homemade vanilla ice cream drenched in strong coffee.

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Beware Of Pity by Stefan Zweig. It's about a Dragoons officer in 1912 – it's a gasp-making masterpiece.

**The priority activity if you were the invisible Man for a day...** I'd listen to Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry talk about Syria. I'd love to know what they're really planning.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** The North Terminal at Gatwick airport! I hate the fact that you arrive at Gatwick and have to go straight to another airport via the transit train.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Advise & Consent from 1962 starring Henry Fonda and Charles Laughton. It's a political story with clever satire and terrific performances.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My mother, a councillor in Weston-super-Mare who was a newspaper columnist and ran a small business. She never let on that we faced penury and she made sure I had a good education.



From top: Lord's cricket ground, a Fabergé egg, Thomas Jefferson, I Want To Hold Your Hand by The Beatles, an auction gavel, Beware Of Pity by Stefan Zweig, affogato, Annette Bening and The Entombment Of Christ by Caravaggio

PS...

*Will Young sets off on a national tour with hit West End musical Cabaret. Heartwarming coming-of-age drama The Way Way Back – starring Toni Collette – hits cinemas on Wednesday. And Studio Zoo, folkster Newton Faulkner's new album, is out Monday*



**NEXT WEEK**

- Face to face with TV's most handsome posh boy
- Chef Gino D'Acampo reveals Italy's sensual foodie secrets
- And don't miss Britain's brightest and best TV listings