## The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: childcare guru Dr Miriam Stoppard, 77

The prized possession you value above all others... My collection of drawings, birthday cards and Thank You notes from my 11 grandchildren – aged six to 15. I look at them each day and feel loved.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The History Of Love by Nicole Krauss. It's about love transcending time.

The higgest regret you wish your

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Buying books. I buy four or five a week and my house has piles of unread or half-read books everywhere.

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... Florence Nightingale. She defied convention to succeed in a man's world. I'd love to talk to her about the Crimean War.

The film you can watch time and time again... I love all Humphrey Bogart's

films, especially To Have And
Have Not with Lauren Bacall.
The sexual chemistry crackles.



The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People who feel the world owes them a living. I'm from a poor Geordie family and we had a strong work ethic. It was impressed upon me that you have to work.

The person who has influenced you most... John Ingram. my

watch Chinese films in the 80s

and have loved it ever since.

you most... John Ingram, my mentor when I was training to be a doctor in my 20s. He took me under his wing and lit the fuel in me to pursue medicine.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... Be the best you can be and take failure in your stride.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... The origins of the universe. I could listen to Professor Brian Cox for hours. I love the science of working out how everything began.

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... A pencil drawing of a horse by the late artist and friend Elisabeth Frink. She gave it to me, but it was thrown out by mistake during a house move.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... The History Of Love by Nicole Krauss. It's about love transcending time.

The biggest regret you wish you could amend... Not learning to speak Mandarin. I used to

ering knowledge, particularly about medicine. I'm 77, but my brain is as voracious as ever and I keep engaged.

The misapprehension about

yourself you wish you could erase... That I'm frivolous because I love fashion, make-up and hair. I love those things but I can be deeply serious.

The poem that touches your soul... Seamus Heaney's Digging. He talks of his father's ability to dig peat and shape earth, while he only has a pen.

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Passing my 11-plus. We were from a slum area and my ambitions were not great. Passing that exam got me into Central Newcastle High School and a new life. I realised that by working hard and passing exams anything was possible.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** My life's full of happy moments. A recent one was collecting my ten-year-old granddaughter Esmé from school when she told me she'd been voted Form Captain.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my son Will, now 42, got whooping cough when he was three months old. We had to rush him to hospital and he was put in an oxygen tent. I thought I would lose him.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd steal all the art squirrelled away in private collections and put it on display.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd watch the painter Frank Auerbach work.

The song that means most to you... Richard Strauss's At Sunset. It's about the brevity of life and how one day you'll no longer see the things you most cherish.

The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions... I'd wake up in a bolthole I own by Bamburgh beach, Northumberland, where I spent much of my childhood. I'd begin the day with my favourite walk to Stag Rocks then have a coffee and a croissant at Noel's village shop, which hasn't changed since I was a child. Later, I'd go fishing in the Bahamas with my husband Chris, Will and my other son Ed, 40.

'People think I'm frivolous because I love fashion, make-up and hair, but I can be deeply serious too'

Their dad Tom [playwright Tom Stoppard] and I are great friends, so he'll join us. Lunch would be with the wider family at my house in southern France. I'd prepare salad, vegetables and local cheeses and open some local white wine called Le Perlé. In the afternoon I'd go trekking in the Himalayas. In the evening, Chris and I would go to Opéra Comique in Paris to watch Debussy's Pelléas Et Mélisande. I'd end the day with dinner at my friend Nicole Farhi's house with girlfriends. She makes a delicious Provençal rabbit dish and she'd treat us to some wonderful wine.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To travel the trans-Andean train through Peru and Bolivia.

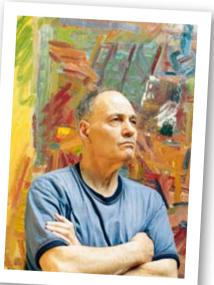
The philosophy that underpins your life... Onwards and upwards.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I just want a party, which can take whatever form my family decides. I'd like my ashes scattered at Stag Rocks.

**The way you want to be remembered...**For introducing the concept that women should choose how they give birth.

**The Plug...** I'm an ambassador for Shampoo Heads, quality shampoo and bubble bath for children. Visit www. shampooheads.com. ■

As told to Rob McGibbon



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PS...

Jennifer Lawrence and Bradley Cooper star in drama Serena, in cinemas from Friday. Hit Broadway musical Memphis opens at the Shaftesbury Theatre on Thursday. And Neil Diamond's new album Melody Road is out on Monday

86 weekend

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