



From top:
The Hollywood
Roosevelt hotel,
pancakes, Emily
Brontë's Wuthering
Heights, Susanna
running the
London Marathon,
Harriet Walter,
Coldplay, Bussy
Malone, Crystal
Palace FC and
Dorothy Parker

The prized possession you value above all others... A copy of the Gormenghast Trilogy by Mervyn Peake, which the actress Harriet Walter gave to me after I played her daughter in Channel 4's The Price when I was 13. It reminds me of a life-changing experience. I loved acting but I didn't pursue it because so few actors succeed.

The unqualified regret you wish you could amend... That I've not written a novel. I'm terrified of committing to the page, but I'll be sorry if I come to the end of my life and haven't written one.

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

I'd wake up with my partner Dominic and our three sons – Sam, ten, Finn, nine, and Jack, seven – at the Cipriani hotel in Venice, then we'd head to the Hollywood Roosevelt hotel in LA for breakfast. I'd have scrambled eggs with asparagus, spinach and avocado, followed by pancakes with fruit and whipped butter. Then we'd hang out by the pool. Later we'd have a picnic lunch in the dunes at Camber Sands in East Sussex and play on the beach. In the evening, Dom and I would have margaritas and burritos at the Puerto Alegre Mexican restaurant in San Francisco with a mariachi band playing.

The temptation you wish you could resist... Checking Twitter. It's endlessly fascinating, but it's also a black hole for your time and energy.

The book that holds an everlasting resonance... Wuthering Heights by Emily Brontë. It spoke to me as a teenager and I marvelled at its complexity in my 20s and 30s, but now I'm 42 and a mother it feels unbearably cruel.

The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day... I'd see what my children do at school because when I ask them, they all say, 'Nothing!'

The pet hate that makes your hackles rise... People describing their dreams. Is there anything more pointless?

The film you can watch time and time again... Bussy Malone from 1976. I always cry during You Give A Little Love, the song at the end.

The person who has influenced you most... My partner, Dominic. I was a commitment phobe until we met, but since then I've learnt a lot. He's very supportive and accepts why I don't want to get married. I had a choppy childhood after my parents divorced when I was nine. I want us to do it our way.



'I love hip-hop music, there's something primal about the beat. In my alternative universe I'm a DJ in a hip-hop nightclub!'

The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: BBC Breakfast's Susanna Reid

The figure from history for whom you'd most like to buy a pie and a pint... The American writer Dorothy Parker. She was a clever, glamorous, witty and acerbic poet.

The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child... The same Goethe quote my mum passed on to me, 'Whatever you can do, or dream you can do, begin it. Boldness has genius, power and magic in it.' It's basically saying you can do anything, just get started.

The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity... Hip-hop music. There's something primal about the beat. It's so powerful. In my alternative universe, I'm a DJ in a hip-hop nightclub!

The treasured item you lost and wish you could have again... Silence. I've had tinnitus since Finn's birth, which probably resulted from a difficult labour.

The unending quest that drives you on... To ensure that my children have happy and fulfilled childhoods.

The poem that touches your soul... Still I Rise by American poet Maya Angelou, which is about her fighting oppression to make a success of her life.

The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase... That I hate my commute to Salford. I spend 21 hours a week travelling from London, but I relish that time and get lots done. And I'd be doing housework otherwise!

The event that altered the course of your life and character... Becoming editor of my student newspaper Epigram at Bristol University when I was 19. It gave me a mission for my life.

The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it... I'd nobble the results in the Championship so Crystal Palace would get automatic promotion to the Premier League.

The song that means most to you... Coldplay's Paradise. It's cheesy, but it fills me with love and optimism.

The happiest moment you will cherish forever... Seeing my family as I reached the 18th mile in last year's London Marathon. To know how proud they were of me carried me to the end.

The saddest time that shook your world... When my mum told me she and Dad were getting divorced. I cried and cried. I don't blame them and I know it was the right thing, but it was so sad.

The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you... To finish this year's Marathon in under five hours. I did five hours, 12 minutes last time.

The philosophy that underpins your life... Everything seems impossible – until it's done.

The order of service at your funeral... I'm not religious so I'll leave it up to my family to decide if they want a spiritual service. I'd like my ashes to be buried next to my grandparents in Croydon.

The way you want to be remembered... By family and friends, as someone who loved unconditionally. By viewers, as someone who brightened the mornings. And as an award-winning novelist!

The Plug... Susanna presents BBC Breakfast, daily, from 6am, BBC1. ■

As told Rob McGibbon

PS...

Tom Hanks and Halle Berry star in magical time-travelling movie Cloud Atlas – in cinemas from Friday. Frances Ruffelle plays the French chanteuse in Piaf at Leicester's Curve Theatre. And Joe Cocker releases his 23rd album, Fire It Up, on Monday



NEXT WEEK

- Mouthwatering dishes from Simon Cowell's new show Food Glorious Food
- The inside story on Call The Midwife's biggest shock yet
- Jamie Oliver cooks French classics
- PLUS Britain's best TV listings