

# The DEFINITE ARTICLE

We ask a celebrity a set of devilishly probing questions – and only accept THE definitive answer. This week: Desert Island Discs host Kirsty Young



'People think I'm standoffish. I'm reserved, which is a Scottish thing that can be misinterpreted. I should be more gregarious but I'm shy'

**The prized possession you value above all others...** My family photos. They trigger so many memories.

**The biggest regret you wish you could amend...** Not savouring my youth. I wish I'd appreciated being full of energy and not having responsibilities.

**The temptation you wish you could resist...** Sourdough bread and salted Irish butter. If I didn't like it so much I wouldn't have to go to the gym so much!

**The book that holds an everlasting resonance...** Nothing To Be Frightened Of by Julian Barnes. It's an incredible memoir about how you deal with it when people close to you die.

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

Elizabeth I. She was a pioneer in a man's world. And I'd like Elvis Presley to be with us too. He could paint my toenails, which he supposedly did for Barbra Streisand.

Right: Elvis. Above right: Homemade jam. Far right: A painting by Samuel Peplow



**The priority activity if you were the Invisible Woman for a day...** I'd love to be in the Today programme studio when a big story kicks off. I'm a radio nut and to present that programme is the absolute pinnacle.

**The unlikely interest that engages your curiosity...** Making my own jam and chutney. I got into it when we moved from London to Oxfordshire in 2011. It's my secret 'granny' activity.

**The pet hate that makes your hackles rise...** Seeing rubbish in hedgerows gets up my snout! I wish people wouldn't abuse the countryside.

**The person who has influenced you most...** My mother, Catherine. She's 72 now and we're very close. She's loyal, very stylish and has a terrific sense of humour. She also taught me how to be a mother.

**The film you can watch time and time again...** Woody Allen's Crimes And Misdemeanours. It's so clever and the acting is superb.

**The misapprehension about yourself you wish you could erase...** That I'm a bit standoff-ish. I'm reserved, which is a Scottish thing, and that can be misinterpreted. I should be more gregarious, but I'm quite shy.



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

A pair of diamond earrings given to me by Nick [her husband, hotelier and club owner Nick Jones] and my daughter Freya [13] on the birth of my second child Iona [now eight] in 2006. A thief stole them from my bag five years ago.

**The piece of wisdom you would pass on to a child...** Everything passes.

**The unending quest that drives you on...** To find the perfectly cut dark blue jacket! You can shove it over anything and you immediately look done.

**The poem that touches your soul...** Late Fragment by Raymond Carver. It's very short – only 30 words – but it articulates how all of us want to be loved.

**The event that altered the course of your life and character...** Meeting my husband 16 years ago. I'd gone to Babington House [one of Nick's hotels] in Somerset with my sister, Laura. He carried my bags and had lunch with us. By the end of lunch he'd captured my heart.

**The philosophy that underpins your life...** Live your life kindly.

**The song that means most to you...** Can't Take My Eyes Off You by Andy Williams. It was played in the bar later that day when I met Nick. Everybody was having a big night and we were up on the tables and chairs singing, and he was sort of singing it to me.

**The crime you would commit knowing you could get away with it...** I'd steal one of Samuel Peplow's paintings from the Scottish National Gallery.

**The way you would spend your fantasy 24 hours, with no travel restrictions...** The day would begin at home. Both my daughters would sleep late, then Nick would make us scrambled eggs. We'd take our dogs, a Labrador called Olive and a Maltese crossbreed called Pierre, for a walk then Nick and I would go for lunch with my Scottish family at The Shore seafood restaurant in Leith. Then we'd walk on the beautiful Gullane beach. We'd be collected at the seafront by a speedboat which would reappear on the northwest coast of Majorca, where we'd go swimming. We'd drop anchor at Cala Foradada and walk up the hill to a restaurant we know for some rosé wine. The day would end back at home. We'd have all the family there – including my two

stepchildren – as well as the neighbours for a barbecue. I'd do salads, but Nick is head of operations on the wood oven. We'd laugh into the night with the kids running around us.

**The happiest moment you will cherish forever...** When I was six and I made Laura properly laugh for the first time by doing a funny voice. We'd found our secret language of humour.

**The saddest time that shook your world...** When the 11-year-old daughter of someone dear to me had E. coli seven years ago. We knew she could die and I felt totally impotent. Luckily she made a full recovery.

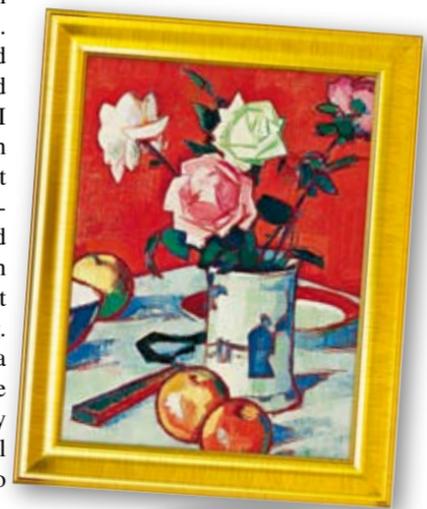
**The unfulfilled ambition that continues to haunt you...** To do the perfect interview on Desert Island Discs.

**The order of service at your funeral...** I will have a humanist funeral. All I ask is that someone reads the poem When I Am Dead, My Darling by Christina Rossetti and that they serve Ruinart Blanc de Blancs champagne. I'd like my ashes scattered in our garden.

**The way you want to be remembered...** For small kindnesses.

**The Plug...** Meningitis Awareness Week runs from 15-21 September. Kirsty is a patron of the Meningitis Research Foundation. For more information visit [www.meningitis.org](http://www.meningitis.org).

As told to Rob McGibbon



## PS...

Crime thriller *A Walk Among The Tombstones*, with Dan Stevens, is in cinemas from Friday. Pamela Stephenson's Brazilian dance show, *Brazouka*, hits London on Tuesday. And *The Script's* new album, *No Sound Without Silence*, is out on Monday



## NEXT WEEK

- Ben Miller on the boozy night that changed his life
- Lesley Nicol takes us behind the scenes at *Downton Abbey*
- Monty Don on dazzling sunflowers
- PLUS the nation's best TV guide