

VANITY FAIR'S  
**PROUST**  
QUESTIONNAIRE

*100 Luminaries Ponder  
Love, Death, Happiness, and the Meaning of Life*

WILLIAM F. BUCKLEY JR.

ARETHA FRANKLIN

MARTIN SCORSESE

GORE VIDAL

BETTE MIDLER

KARL LAGERFELD

SALMAN RUSHDIE

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DAVID BOWIE

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OSCAR DE LA RENTA



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JAMES BROWN

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CAROLINA HERRERA

JIMMY BUFFETT

KEITH RICHARDS

ANDREW WEIL

JASPER JOHNS

DIANE VON FURSTENBERG

BILL O'REILLY

EMMA THOMPSON

QUINCY JONES

HEDY LAMARR

NORMAN MAILER

... AND 67 MORE

*Edited by* GRAYDON CARTER    ♦    *Illustrated by* RISK O



A R N O L D S C H W A R Z E N E G G E R

ACTOR AND CALIFORNIA GOVERNOR

# The lowest depth of misery: “Did you read the reviews for *Last Action Hero*?”

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

Spending time with my family—with no phone, no fax, and no meetings.

**What is your greatest fear?**

I am petrified of bikini waxing. I had a very bad experience in 1978.

**Which living person do you most admire?**

My mother-in-law, Eunice Shriver, who founded the Special Olympics, and my father-in-law, Sargent Shriver, who founded Job Corps and was the first director of the Peace Corps.

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?**

People who speak with heavy American accents. I can barely understand them. No, seriously, dishonesty.

**What is your greatest extravagance?**

I am a major shoe queen.

**What do you dislike most about your appearance?**

Let’s just say Milton Berle had the same exact problem. I tell you, it’s a curse.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**

“Maria, I said I’m sorry” and “Yes, dear.”

**What is your greatest regret?**

My only regret is when an actor wins an Oscar for a role I turned down. Although I still say I wasn’t right for *Forrest Gump*.

**What or who is the greatest love of your life?**

My wife and my four children, who have all my love and come first, above everything else.

**What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?**

Did you read the reviews for *Last Action Hero*?

**What do you most value in your friends?**

I think I value the same things everyone does—loyalty, a sense of humor, the ability to make campaign contributions.

**Who are your heroes in real life?**

Teachers and principals, who are underpaid but devote their lives to making sure our kids get a good education. It’s the best defense against gangs, violence, and drug use by kids—and the best chance to ensure their future.

**Who are your favorite writers?**

My favorite fiction writers are studio accountants.

**How would you like to die?**

From a heart attack at the Kodak Theatre when they announce I won best actor for *Terminator 3*.

**What is your motto?**

“If at first you don’t succeed, try, try, try again. Then use a stunt double.”

July 2003

(Schwarzenegger became governor of California in November 2003.)

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

An empty house and a good book.

**What is your greatest fear?**

That the greatest days of my country are past.

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

Impatience.

**What is the trait you most deplore in others?**

Ignorance and arrogance.

**What is your greatest extravagance?**

Flowers and philanthropy.

**What is your current state of mind?**

Agitated.

**On what occasion do you lie?**

Who needs an occasion?

**What do you dislike most about your appearance?**

My roots.

**Which living person do you most despise?**

The Bluetooth-wearing S.U.V. driver  
who idles in front of my building.

**What is the quality you most like in a man?**

Guts.

**What is the quality you most like in a woman?**

Balls.

**Which words or phrases do you most overuse?**

"I gotta get crackin'."

**Which talent would you most like to have?**

The ability to read a spreadsheet.

**What do you consider your greatest achievement?**

My daughter, Sophie.

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing,**

**what do you think it would be?**

The wind.

**Where would you like to live?**

At Sissinghurst.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

My sanity.

**What do you most value in your friends?**

A talent to amuse.

**Who are your favorite writers?**

Nabokov and P. G. Wodehouse.

**Who is your favorite hero of fiction?**

Ignatius J. Reilly.

**Which historical figure do you most identify with?**

Wallis Simpson and Johnny Appleseed.

**What is it that you most dislike?**

Pollution and polluters.

**What is your motto?**

"Fuck 'em if they can't take a joke."

*August 2008*

Whom I most despise:  
"The Bluetooth-wearing  
S.U.V. driver who idles in  
front of my building."



**B E T T E M I D L E R**

SINGER, ACTRESS, AND COMEDIAN



R A Y C H A R L E S

MUSICIAN

# “God helps those who help themselves.”

**What is your idea of perfect happiness?**

A great performance when everything comes together: the music, the audience—the whole thing. It’s what makes me want to keep touring and recording.

**Which historical figure do you most identify with?**

Martin Luther King Jr. He was a man who made a difference and stood for something in life.

He had guts, and a lot of people have benefited from his courage.

**What is the trait you most deplore in yourself?**

My inability to slow down.

**What do you consider the most underrated virtue?**

Talent. People with very little of it are packaged and marketed like crazy these days, especially in music.

The true talents are few and far between. Original talent is especially lacking. Everything and everyone sounds the same.

**Which talent would you most like to have?**

That’s a tough one. Maybe be the world chess champion.

I love that game. The pros tell me I’m pretty good!

**If you were to die and come back as a person or thing, what do you think it would be?**

That’s a wild question. I’d probably come back as an instrument—that’s how much I love music.

**What is your most treasured possession?**

My hands. They guide everywhere I go, and they allow me to play the piano and other instruments, which has been my lifeline since an early age.

**What do you regard as the lowest depth of misery?**

Racism and poverty. Two scourges that I have known since early in my life. Sadly, while things are better for many, there are those who still suffer the indignities of both. Until we find a way to fix these problems, there will always be unrest in our society and our world.

**What do you most value in your friends?**

Loyalty. Many of them date back many years. Quincy Jones and I met at the beginning of our careers, never knowing they would be so full and long-lasting. Over the years, we’ve helped each other out.

**Who are your heroes in real life?**

The everyday people who get up and go to work, feed their kids, and try to do the right thing.

They’re my real heroes. They’re the people who come and see my shows, spend their hard-earned money, and I appreciate their loyalty and support.

**How would you like to die?**

Peacefully, when the good Lord is ready to call my number.

**What is your motto?**

“God helps those who help themselves.”

February 2003

(Ray Charles died in 2004.)



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**P**ulled from the popular Proust Questionnaire page of *Vanity Fair*, a revealing look into the intimate lives of our most prominent cultural figures.

Since 1993, *Vanity Fair* magazine has featured the celebrated Proust Questionnaire, in which a different noteworthy person each month answers the same series of probing personal questions. The questionnaire originated as a 19th-century parlor game popularized among friends of Marcel Proust (1871–1922), the French essayist and novelist, who believed that an individual's answers reveal his or her true nature.

Illustrated by Risko, *Vanity Fair's Proust Questionnaire* brings together the responses of 100 of the most vibrant personalities of our time, from Bette Midler and Lauren Bacall to Salman Rushdie and Norman Mailer, from Martin Scorsese and Shirley MacLaine to Aretha Franklin and Eric Clapton. Hilarious, candid, and endlessly fascinating, this is a must-have collection for all connoisseurs of popular culture.

**Graydon Carter** is the editor of *Vanity Fair*.

**Robert Risko** is one of the most renowned celebrity caricaturists working today. Since 1978, when Andy Warhol gave him his first assignment for *Interview* magazine, Risko has drawn portraits of hundreds of notables from the worlds of film and television, music and art, politics and literature. In addition to his countless images for *Vanity Fair*, *Rolling Stone*, *The New Yorker*, and other major magazines, Risko has illustrated book jackets, video and CD covers, and movie posters. He lives in New York City.

*Edited by*  
GRAYDON CARTER

♦  
*Illustrated by*  
RISKO

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