

Meet the Author

John: I am attracted to historical figures who realize there are no easy answers, yet still pursue a goal that they believe in. Most of my fictional characters spend their books discovering that life is much more complex than they thought at first. The people to fear are those who KNOW that they are right, regardless of whether they are or not.

As for historical events, I am fascinated by those that put people under stress, Arctic exploration, war, etc. I am interested in the extremes of human behaviour, good and bad, and situations that give participants no time to think, just react, let us see those extremes.

Rob: For the sake of our budding young writers in the audience, could you describe a little of the research process you go through before you start writing? What was the process you went through for writing *Four Steps To Death*? Why the Battle of Stalingrad, in particular? Have you ever visited Russia?

John: The last question is the easiest. No, I have never visited Russia other than through the pages of books. I think Stalingrad because it was so huge and all encompassing. It was almost like an entire war on its own and it was a struggle, to the bitter end, between utter fanatics.

My research is mostly secondary, books and the Internet, although I have done some primary archival research, primarily for my books on Sir John Franklin

and *And in the Morning*, I spent a week at the Imperial War Museum in London, reading the soldiers' letters from 1914–15. However, I had been reading books on the First World War since I was the age of the audience I was writing for. You could say that I had been researching *And in the Morning* for 35 years.

However I do my research, I feel it is vital to give a sense of the time I am writing about, thus the reading of letters written during the time I am researching. The language does not have to be rigorously authentic, but it must convince the reader that what he is reading is appropriate to the time.

The Internet, with all its shortcomings, is an invaluable tool for discovering details. For example, where else could I easily discover what it was like inside Conrad's Panzer Mark IV in *Four Steps to Death*?

