

# LOOK CLOSER



## WRITE AN ADVENTURE

Steve Backshall is a man of many talents. Not only is he the popular TV presenter of *Deadly 60*, a brave adventurer, journalist and TV presenter, but his *Falcon Chronicles* books are a must-have on any avid reader's bookshelf! This year he has joined forces with tuition provider, This year he is the judge of the National Young Writers' Awards (NYWA). We spoke to Steve to find out more...



### ● How do you get inspiration for your fiction?

My fiction comes from real places, real situations and real animals I have seen on my expeditions. The only thing that is really made up is the people. That said, someone said a few years back, as if it was totally obvious: "Well, Sinter and Saker are you and your sister, right?" I hadn't even realised, but Sinter is a caring doctor who's great with people, and that's my sis, and Saker is a sullen [moody] martial artist who's great with animals but terrible with people...

### ● As well as Saker and Sinter, your children's books all feature amazing animals as the main focus. Why is that?

I've always been obsessed with animals, ever since I was knee-high. It's my main area of expertise, my main passion, and the thing I know the most about, and you're always told to write about what you know best!

### ● Why are you pleased to be a judge on the NYWA?

If this competition had been around when I was a youngster, I would have leapt at the opportunity. It is a chance to discover someone special, who has a unique voice, who could be the great storyteller of a generation! Or it could just be a chance to inspire a few hungry young poets to have their words in print. Whatever, it's a terrific project.



To enter the National Young Writers' Awards 2017, all you have to do is write a story set in 3017 in under 500 words. Post it to NYWA, Explore Learning, 74 North Street, Guildford, GU1 4AW or online at [explorellearning.co.uk/youngwriters](http://explorellearning.co.uk/youngwriters). Good luck!

## "MY FICTION COMES FROM REAL PLACES"

### ● What tips would you give to any budding young writers out there?

My tip for young writers would be to experiment with different forms and subjects. It takes many authors decades before they come up with a style that is all their own. Artists will try everything: charcoal, prints, sculpture, graffiti... authors should do the same!

### ● What can First News readers do to really impress you with their entries?

I would say be authentic. It doesn't have to be exotic. You could write about blackbirds in your back garden or the gnomes alongside them coming alive; I don't care, as long as I can feel your passion springing off the page!

### ● Why do you think it is important for children to get their imaginations going and write stories?

I have gained so much from writing. It has given me an outlet when I've needed a rant, a way of putting my thoughts into order and onto paper. When things are going well, it's as if I have a movie playing in my head and I'm recording it. I love the idea that young authors could gain the same thing.

### ● What was your favourite book growing up?

*The Call Of The Wild* by Jack London. The story of how Buck the farm dog ended up running sleds in the Yukon, then becoming head of a wolf pack. Just thinking about it now puts the hairs up on the back of my neck!



## SPECIAL REPORT

1. Find these facts about Steve Backshall.

Name of his TV series	
Name of his book series	
Name of his favourite childhood book	

2. Why do you think the journalist describes Steve as a “man of many talents”?

3. Look at the first question. What word does Steve repeat **three** times when describing the books that he writes?

4. What does this description tell you about the type of stories you should expect to find in his books (and what you shouldn't expect)?

5. What tips does Steve have for people who want to start writing and who want to try and do well in this competition?

6. How does Steve describe what it's like when writing a story is going really well and he's in full flow?

7. What is Steve talking about in these **quotations**?

“It has given me an outlet when I've needed a rant”	
“It's my main area of expertise”	
“[It] puts the hairs up on the back of my neck”	
“Experiment with different forms”	
“It's a terrific project”	

8. Someone pointed out to Steve that his characters Sinter and Saker are a bit like him and his sister. From how he describes the characters, what can you learn about Steve and his sister?

Steve's sister:	
Steve:	

9. Can you think of two other questions you would like to ask Steve Backshall?

1: .....

2: .....

10. Do you think Steve is a good person to judge a children's writing competition? Explain your reasons.