

# Will Small

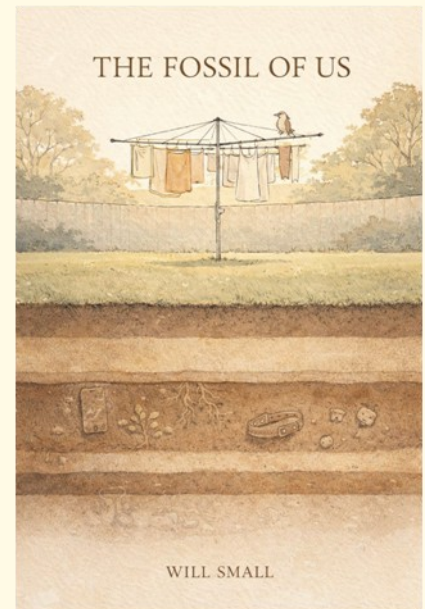
## Poet, Writer, Speaker

### Founder of Lead by Story



**Will Small is an inspiring spoken word poet and storyteller who works at the intersection of the creative arts and social impact. His New Book 'The Fossil of Us' (2026) grapples with human wisdom in the age of AI.**

A 3 x Australian Poetry Slam national finalist, author of *The Fossil of Us* (2026) and *Poems for When the World is Ending*, Will graduated from the ANU in 2013 after writing an English Honours thesis exploring the intersection of slam poetry, hip-hop and alternative approaches to teaching poetry in the classroom. Since then, he has worked with thousands of young people in schools across Australia, passionately inspiring students about the power of the written and spoken word while helping them build creative confidence and find their voice.



**Watch a video of 'For Leo':** <https://vimeo.com/397091469>

*a poem Will wrote for one of his three sons, with a message for young people everywhere.*

### **School Performances & Workshops (grades 7-12, 50 minute sessions)**

Will's school performances integrate dynamic live poetry and storytelling, with engaging creative writing exercises that help every student in the room to overcome their inner critic and write their own original poetry. Will is a highly adaptable presenter and works with teachers/schools to tailor presentations to each group and context. His sessions include:

### **NEW! "Before I am Replaced": Poetry in the Age of AI (grades 7-12, 50-90 minute session)**

What happens when AI can write poems, create art and do much of what we thought made us uniquely human? This workshop explores creativity, authenticity and what it means to pursue human wisdom in an artificial era. Drawing on poems from Will's new book 'The Fossil of Us', this session weaves together the personal, philosophical and satirical into a timely and validating exploration of what it means to think, write and speak. Thought-provoking, affirming and deeply relevant, students explore:

- What can machines do that we can do? What can't they? • Performance: sharing work and finding your voice
- Writing exercises exploring slowness, embodiment, imperfection as features not bugs
- The irreplaceable value of lived experience, emotion, and human perspective

**Workshop sessions:** After a performance Will can run a workshop with a group of students who want to take a deeper dive into the process of writing, editing and performing spoken word poetry. This will include a range of writing exercises and prompts, tips on every stage of developing a piece from ideas through to editing and performance, as well as space for students to ask questions and receive feedback on their work.

**School Residency:** During a Residency Will can work across the school with multiple year levels and group sizes (including professional learning sessions for staff). A Residency can also include the facilitation of a larger outcome, such as an in-school poetry slam or the development of a student poetry anthology.



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## FEEDBACK

"Teaching the art of poetry writing to a group of year 7s is no small feat, and yet, Will Small accomplished this with a professional and authentic manner that had the students actively engaged from start to finish. Through sharing his own works and challenging the students with a range of visual and verbal prompts, Will clearly demonstrated the reflective power that poetry evokes within not just the reader, but the writer as well. Despite not one single student putting their hand up when asked if they'd like to be a poet, by the end of the session, Will had managed to bring out the T.S Eliot in all of them. The final pieces of work were beautifully creative, unique, and vulnerable, as Will ensured they had a safe space in which to share their personal reflections. This session has truly sparked a new interest and appreciation for poetry, and not only those written by dead white men."

**Laura, English teacher, Queenwood School**

"We've had Will in to do performance poetry workshops with Year 9 over the last couple of years. Each time I have been amazed by his ability to engage even the most recalcitrant and self-conscious students. It's so exciting to see kids who have never loved poetry write their own meaningful pieces... and perform them in front of their peers! Will helps teenagers find their voices and use them powerfully."

**Hannah, Head of English, Wyong Christian Community School**

"The kids seemed so comfortable around Will and his impact allowed for everyone to be in their element today. Many of the students said they had never really thought about poetry that way before and/or had never shared their poetry with someone before. Students were very brave in sharing what they had written in the timed writing activities, and the energy seemed to become infectious! Everyone was just so excited to share their pieces! Even freestyle poetry on the spot became approachable with Will's guidance."

**Jo, English/Languages Educator, Lindfield Learning Village**

"Will created a space for our Year 10s that was welcoming, safe, thought-provoking and authentic. He shares honestly, openly and with great skill and helped our students to think deeply about how their 'inner work connects to the outer world' - meaningful, refreshing and exactly what we all need more of. Thanks Will!"

**Lia, Head of Christian Studies, Roseville College**

"We had Will speak at our end of year presentation day. Will's presentation was very well received by both staff, students and parents and there has been a real buzz in the school today as everyone has been discussing Will's performance. It was extremely thoughtful and engaging."

**Kylie, Head of English, Mt St Benedicts College**

Using real life stories engaged our cohort and reinforced the importance of reflection, perspective and taking a moment to breathe. It was one of the most beautiful, empowering and unique presentations that staff and students were moved by.

**Erin, Deputy Principal, Gorokan High School**

Students were encouraged to reflect on their own stories and their place in the world, leaving the session with a greater appreciation for the power of storytelling, particularly through poetry. I definitely recommend this presentation to any school looking to challenge their students and evoke empathy.

**Felicia, English Assistant Head of Department, Knox Grammar School**



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