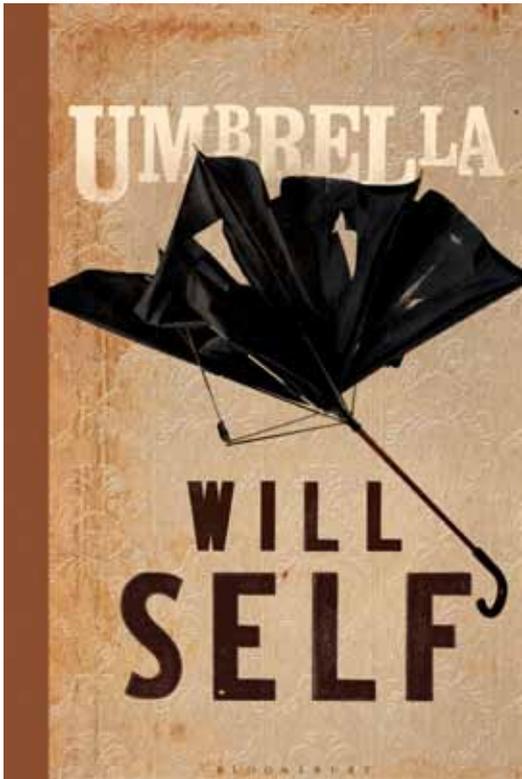


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Reader's Guide



Other novels by Will Self

Walking to Hollywood (2010)

The Butt (2008)

Dr Mukti and Other Tales of Woe (2004)

How the Dead Live (2000)

Tough, Tough Toys for Tough, Tough Boys (1998)

Great Apes (1997)

The Sweet Smell of Psychosis, illustrated by
Martin Rowson (1996)

Junk Mail (1995)

Grey Area (1994)

My Idea of Fun (1993)

Cock and Bull (1992)

The Quantity Theory of Insanity (1991)

Umbrella

Will Self

Bloomsbury

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About the author

Will Self is the author of many novels and books of non-fiction, including *How the Dead Live*, which was shortlisted for the Whitbread Novel of the Year 2002 and *The Butt*, winner of the Bollinger Everyman Wodehouse Prize for Comic Fiction 2008. He lives in South London.

Umbrella

Umbrella sets out to understand the nature of the modern world by going back to the source – the industrial madness of World War One. Set across an entire century, *Umbrella* follows the complex story of Audrey Death, a feminist who falls victim to the encephalitis lethargica epidemic that rages across Europe, and Dr Zack Busner, who spends a summer waking the post-encephalitic patients under his care using a new and powerful drug.

Discussion points

Will Self is a middle-aged male novelist. How convincing is the character of Audrey Death as a young girl and an old woman?

Will Self tells his story through two narrators (Audrey Death and Dr Frank Busner) and three time sequences (1918, 1971, 2010) leading to a rich but complex narrative structure. What are the advantages of this complexity? Are there significant differences between the narrative style of three time sequences?

Is the ending satisfying? Does it leave you with a sense of greater understanding of the world we live in?

We first see Audrey as a little girl, playing with her brothers and building a little grotto? What is the significance of the grotto she builds each year under her bed in the mental hospital?

Do you agree with *The Guardian's* assessment that *Umbrella* is 'a linguistically adept, emotionally subtle and ethically complex novel'?

Themed reading

James Joyce *Ulysses*
T. S. Eliot *The Waste Land*
Virginia Woolf *Mrs Dalloway*
Oliver Sacks *Awakenings*

Useful links

[Author's website](http://will-self.com/)
<http://will-self.com/>

[Publisher's website](http://www.bloomsbury.com/)
<http://www.bloomsbury.com/>