

SELF-PUBLISHED LITERARY LEGENDS

L. Frank Baum, *The Wizard of Oz*
Henry David Thoreau, *Walden Pond* **Beatrix Potter**, *Peter Rabbit*
J.M. Barrie, author of *Peter Pan* **Thomas Hardy**
Virginia Woolf **Walt Whitman**, *Leaves of Grass* **Mark Twain**
D.H. Lawrence, *Women in Love and Lady Chatterley's Lover*
Amanda Brown, *Legally Blonde* **E. Lynn Harris**, *Invisible Life*
James Redfield, *The Celestine Prophecy* **Anais Nin**
James Joyce, *Ulysses* **Richard Nelson Bolles**, *What Color is Your Parachute?*
Nikki Giovanni, *Black Feeling Black Talk* **Pat Conroy**, author of *The Prince of Tides*
Deepak Chopra **Lewis Carroll**, *Alice's Adventures in Wonderland*
William Strunk, Jr. (and his student E. B. White), *The Elements of Style*



The authors above all self published at some point. Hundreds of new authors self publish every month, some of whom will undoubtedly find personal satisfaction, as well as critical and/or financial success from their efforts. Many others will fail critically or financially, just like countless other authors with mainstream publishing deals who wind up on the remainder 'sale' piles in bookstores, whose works have failed critically or financially. But each set of authors will have the personal satisfaction of having a published novel.

Some of the greatest works of literature, as specifically noted above, suffered rejection by publishing houses. In some cases, the writers chose to self publish to maintain control of their work. The authors used their initiative and paid to have their novels or poetry published. Without the faith in their craft, consider the classic works of literature the world may have lost.

Self publishing has a long and rich history in the world of books. It was quite common, before the proliferation of mainstream publishing houses in the twentieth century, for authors to either pay fully for the publication of their work or help 'subsidize' the printing by contributing monetarily.

As major publishing houses continue to become one more acquisition of conglomerates, it makes it increasingly more difficult for new writers to secure a publishing deal through the more traditional publishers. Countless talented writers remain unpublished, much as there are other great artists who do not find a platform.

Hence, the world of self publishing continues to grow as an alternative to traditional publication, and has clearly served as a vehicle launching numerous literary careers.

Independent films and self-published books:

There is something to be said about how analogous self-published books are to independent films. When a filmmaker is turned down by the big studios, or recognizes that his or her little film simply wouldn't get a green light from Hollywood, they turn to self production...to making an 'independent' film. Sometimes that requires personal bank loans, maxing out credit cards, borrowing from your in-laws or taking a second mortgage. But they do it. And, eventually, these films end up on the screen. Some of the films are quite remarkable, while others are forgettable.

Self-published books are no different. But few of them ever make it to the bookstore chains or even the independent bookstores. Support self-published authors. Visit iuniverse.com or other print-on-demand websites and browse the titles to see what might spark your interest. Consider what your support of a self-published author might mean in terms of that next great literary voice.

Publishing trivia:

Terry McMillan's first book, *Mama*, was published by Houghton Mifflin in 1987. But she openly relays the story of how when she saw that the publicity department wasn't going to promote the book, other than standard press releases, she went to work doing her own marketing. It was through her efforts mailing to independent bookstores, arranging her own book tours and selling the book herself that the book went on to sell over 10,000 copies.

John Grisham's first novel, *A Time to Kill*, was published by a relatively new, small publishing house that quickly went out of business. He sold the few copies he had out of the trunk of his car, but he couldn't get reprints and the novel got stuck in limbo. It was only after his success with later novels like *The Firm* that *A Time to Kill* was republished. In my opinion, it's one of his finest books.