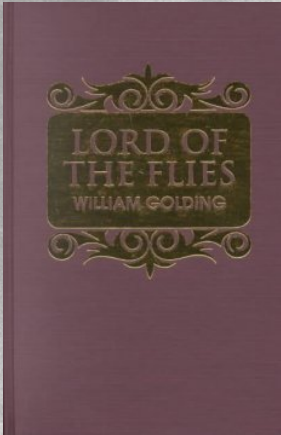
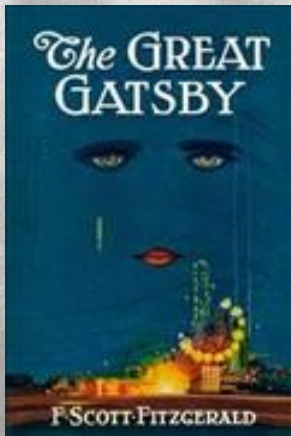


# Literary Classics That Didn't Sell (at first)

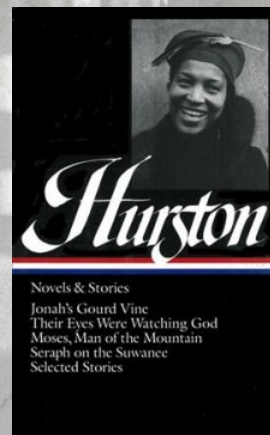


William Golding's *Lord of the Flies* sold a middling 4,662 copies in the UK in its first year—until seven years later, when Golding embarked on a lecture tour of American colleges: "A paperback had come out in 1959: it sold 4,300 that year, 15,000 in 1960, 75,000 in 1961, and an estimated half million by the end of 1962, after which the plates wore out and had to be replaced."

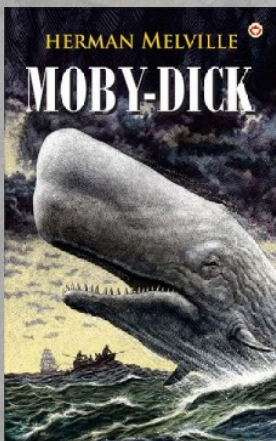
Since then, it's sold over 10 million.



Though its numbers are higher than the other books on this list, F. Scott Fitzgerald's *The Great Gatsby* was a disappointment when it was published in 1925, getting mediocre reviews and selling only 20,870 copies.



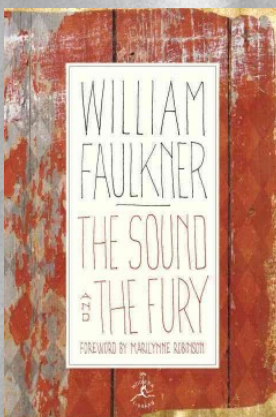
Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* sold fewer than 5,000 copies in her lifetime and was almost entirely forgotten until it was rediscovered by Alice Walker. Now, 500,000 copies of her books are sold every year.



Only 3,715 copies of *Moby-Dick* were sold during Herman Melville's lifetime (less than a quarter of what *Typee* sold), earning him a measly total profit of \$1,259.45.



Famously, James Joyce's *Dubliners* only sold 499 copies in its first year—and of those, 120 were purchased by Joyce himself.



William Faulkner's notoriously difficult *The Sound and the Fury* sold "only 3,300 copies between 1929 and 1944. By the time it was reprinted in 1946, the novel had been out of print for several years."



In the first year of its publication, Ticknor & Fields sold about 738 copies of Henry David Thoreau's *Walden* (records from three of the twelve months are lost), mostly to inhabitants of Boston.