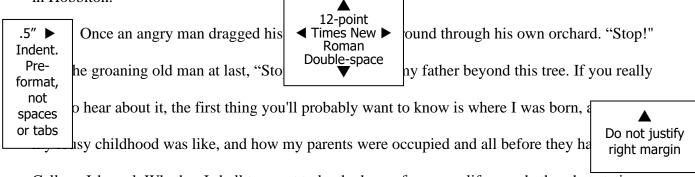


Of all the things that drive men to sea, the most common disaster, I've come to learn, is women. When Mr. Bilbo Baggins of Bag End announced that he would shortly be celebrating his eleventy-first birthday with a party of special magnificence, there was much talk and excitement in Hobbiton.



Call me Ishmael. Whether I shall turn out to be the hero of my own life, or whether that station will be held by anybody else, these pages must show.



I was born in the Year 1632, in the City of York, of a good Family, tho' not of that country, my father being a foreigner of Bremen, who settled first at Hull. Somewhere in La Mancha, in a place whose name I do not care to remember, a gentleman lived not long ago, one of those who has a lance and ancient shield on a shelf and keeps a skinny nag and a greyhound for racing.



He was an old man who fished alone in a skiff in the Gulf Stream and he had gone eighty-four days now without taking a fish. It is a truth universally acknowledged, that a single man in possession of a good fortune One space after a period heavens and the earth. Happy families are all alike; every unhappy family is unhappy in its own way. It was a bright cold day in April, and the clocks were striking to NO extra spaces between paragraphs.

In my younger and more vulnerable years my father gave me

turning over in my mind ever since. The cold passed reluctantly from the earth, and the retiring

