

# Motherese or Parentese Encyclopedia Article

## Motherese or Parentese

The following sections of this BookRags Literature Study Guide is offprint from Gale's For Students Series: Presenting Analysis, Context, and Criticism on Commonly Studied Works: Introduction, Author Biography, Plot Summary, Characters, Themes, Style, Historical Context, Critical Overview, Criticism and Critical Essays, Media Adaptations, Topics for Further Study, Compare & Contrast, What Do I Read Next?, For Further Study, and Sources.

(c)1998-2002; (c)2002 by Gale. Gale is an imprint of The Gale Group, Inc., a division of Thomson Learning, Inc. Gale and Design and Thomson Learning are trademarks used herein under license.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Encyclopedia of Popular Fiction: "Social Concerns", "Thematic Overview", "Techniques", "Literary Precedents", "Key Questions", "Related Titles", "Adaptations", "Related Web Sites". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

The following sections, if they exist, are offprint from Beacham's Guide to Literature for Young Adults: "About the Author", "Overview", "Setting", "Literary Qualities", "Social Sensitivity", "Topics for Discussion", "Ideas for Reports and Papers". (c)1994-2005, by Walton Beacham.

All other sections in this Literature Study Guide are owned and copyrighted by BookRags, Inc.

# Contents

<a href="#">Motherese or Parentese Encyclopedia Article.....</a>	<a href="#">1</a>
<a href="#">Contents.....</a>	<a href="#">2</a>
<a href="#">Motherese or Parentese.....</a>	<a href="#">3</a>

# Motherese or Parentese

Pattern of speaking used by a caretaker when talking to an infant.

Motherese, or parentese, is the name given to the pattern of speech used by caretakers (mothers and other adults) when talking to infants. It is characterized by higher pitch, slower tempo, and wider fluctuations in intonation than that used in normal conversation with older children or adults. Motherese is employed by caregivers worldwide in interacting with infants. Although most researchers believe that the motherese speech pattern is not essential for the infant's language acquisition, it does attract the infant's attention and get him or her to focus on spoken language. In addition, motherese may draw attention to certain language features (patterns of emphasis, relationship of words to affect) that help infants learn. A feature of motherese—repeating what the infant or child attempts to say—is effective in encouraging the use of language in communication.

In the mid-1980s, studies at Stanford University demonstrated that infants preferred listening to motherese, with its pattern of exaggerated tone and slower tempo, over adult conversation. Other studies at the University of Washington found that caregivers saturate their motherese speech pattern with vowels. The researchers concluded that this feature of motherese helps to form the infant's perceptual categories for his or her native language.

## For Further Study

### Books

Kuhl, Patricia K. "Perceptions of Speech and Sound in Early Infancy." In *Handbook of Infant Perception: Volume 2*. New York: Academic Press, 1987.

Welker, J. F., and J. E. Pegg. "Infant Speech Perception and Phonological Acquisition." In *Phonological Development: Models, Research, Implications*. Timonium, MD: York, 1992.

### Periodicals

Fernald, Anne. "Four-month-old Infants Prefer to Listen to Motherese." *Infant Behavior and Development* 8, 1985, pp. 303-306.

"How to Talk 'Parentese' to Your Child." *Newsweek*, Spring/Summer 1997, p. 21.