

# Character Builder 您好嗎？

The basic unit of the Chinese language is the *zi* (字), i.e. a Chinese word. Each *zi* has a written form (called a character, made up of strokes), a sound (made up of consonant and vowel) and a meaning (or multiple meanings). When we speak or write Chinese, we string *zi* together to form terms, phrases and sentences.

## This week: Words about Middle East

漠

Pronunciation: *mo* (Putonghua, 4<sup>th</sup> tone), *mok* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: desert

In the 乾燥 (*gan zao* = dry-hot) 阿拉伯沙漠 (*a la bo sha mo* = "Arabia"-transliterated desert), 風沙 (*feng sha* = wind~sand = sandstorms), 海市蜃樓 (*hai shi chun lou* = sea~town~clam's-breath~tower = mirages) are common.

遊牧民族 (*you mu min zu* = roam~herd~people~tribes = nomadic tribes) rear 駱駝 (*luo tuo* = camels = 沙漠之舟 *sha mo zhi zhou* = desert-'s~ship), use caravans for transportation.

水井 (*shui jing* = water~wells) give rise to 綠洲 (*lu zhou* = green~island/continent = oases). 棗樹 (*zu shu* = date~trees), 葡萄 (*pu tao* = grapes), 無花果 (*wu hua guo* = hasn't~flower~fruit = figs), 仙人掌 (*xian ren zhang* = fairy~person~hand~palm = cacti) are cultivated.

by Diana Yue