

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.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about Genesis

紀

Putonghua pronunciation: *ji4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *gei2*

Meanings: record, geological period

紀 = record/time-period: 紀事 (*ji4 shi4* = record-events = recordkeeping), 紀念 (*ji4 nian4* = record-remember = commemoration), 侏羅紀 (*zhu1 luo2 ji4* = “Jurassic”-transliterated-geological-period).

In “創世紀” (*chuang4 shi4 ji4* = create~world~record/period = Genesis), 神 (*shen2*, God) created 光 (*guang1*, light), 天地萬物 (*tian1 di4 wan4 wu4* = heaven~earth~ten-thousand~things = the world and everything in it). 阿當夏娃 (*A4 Dang1 Xia4 Wa1* = “Adam” “Eve”-transliterated) lived in 伊甸園 (*Yi1 Dian4 yuan2* = “Eden”-garden = Garden of Eden) until 蛇 (*she2*, snake/serpent) tempted them to eat 禁果 (*jin4 guo3* = forbidden-fruit).

Fundamentalists uphold 創造論 (*chuang4 zao4 lun4* = create~make~discuss = creation theory). Darwinists advocate 進化論 (*jin4 hua4 lun4* = progress~transform~discuss = evolution theory).