

Character Builder 您好學嗎?

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 the Manchurian people

滿

Putonghua pronunciation: *man3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *moon5*

Meaning: full, Manchuria, Manchurian, Manchu

滿 (radical 氵 = 水 *shui3*, water) means full: 滿載 (*man3 zai4* = fully-loaded), 滿足 (*man3 zu2* = full-adequate = satiated/satisfied/appeased).

China's five major ethnic groups are 漢 (*Han4* race), 滿 (*Man3*, Manchu/Manchurians), 蒙 (*Meng2*, Mongols), 回 (*Hui2* = Hui people), 藏 (*Zang4*, Tibetans). Northerners 滿人 (*Man3 ren2* = Man-people/race = the Manchus/Manchurians), previously called 女真 (*Nü3 Zhen1*), 金 (*Jin1*), proclaimed in 1536 AD their territory was 滿洲 (*Man3 Zhou1* = Man-continent = Manchu/Manchuria).

Manchurians conquered Han-Chinese's 明朝 (*Ming2 chao2* = Ming-Dynasty), established 清朝 (*Qing1 chao2* = Qing-Dynasty, 1644-1911 AD). During Japan's invasion of China (1931-1945) Japan established its puppet regime 滿洲國 (*Man3 Zhou1 guo2* = Manchu-state = Manchukuo = Japanese "Manshu-koku", 1932-1945) in NE China and Inner Mongolia.

by Diana Yue