

# 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 Easter

贖

(radical 貝 *bei* = seashell/money)  
Pronunciation: *shu* (Putonghua, 2<sup>nd</sup> tone), *suk* (Cantonese, 6<sup>th</sup> tone)  
Basic meaning: bail out, redeem

贖 means buying back. Broke, we 典當 (*dian dang* = mortgage~pawn) valuables to pawnshops, consoling ourselves: “有當有贖, 上等之人” (*you dang you shu, shang deng zhi ren* = has~pawn~has~redeem, high~class~'s~person = I pawn then buy back, it's perfectly respectable).

Liberators pay for 奴隸 (*nu li* = slave~servants), 妓女 (*ji nu* = prostitute~women) to 贖身 (*shu shen* = redeem~body = buy out, set free). Kidnappers demand 贖金 (*shu jin* = redeem~gold/money = ransom), threatening 撕票 (*si piao* = tear~ticket = kill the kidnapped person).

Christianity preaches 罪人 (*zui ren* = sin~person = sinners) need 救贖 (*jiu shu* = salvation~redemption). The medieval church sold 贖罪券 (*shu zui juan* = redeem~sin~tickets = indulgences).

by Diana Yue