

Character Builder

您好嗎？俠

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 martial arts

俠

Pronunciation: *xia* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *haap* (Cantonese 6th tone)
Basic meaning: knight-errant, swordsmen, hero

俠, translated as knight-errant, means martial arts heroes/heroines who fight for noble causes. 武俠小說 (*wu xia xiao shuo* = military~hero~little~talk) are epic novels that describe their romantic feats, which are 俠義 (*xia yi* = knight-errant~righteous = brave and moral) in nature.

劍俠 (*jian xia* = sword~knight-errants) are skilled with the sword. 奇俠 (*qi xia* = strange~knight-errants) act in peculiar ways. 飛俠 (*fei xia* = flying~knight-errants) can soar like birds over rooftops. 遊俠 (*you xia* = roaming~knight-errant) travel without fixed destinations. 大俠 (*da xia* = great~knight-errant) are knight-errants of the top order. 俠骨柔腸 (*xia gu rou chang* = knight-errant~bones~gentle~intestines) is a beautiful way of saying a hero also has a tender heart for love.

by Diana Yue