

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 policemen

槍

(radical 木 *mu* = wood)
= 鎗 (radical 金 *mu* = wood)
Pronunciation: *qiang* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *cheung* (Cantonese, 1st tone)
Basic meaning: spear, gun

槍 = spear/gun: 長槍 (*chang qiang* = long~spear/gun/rifle), 手槍 (*shou qiang* = hand-gun), 獵槍 (*lie qiang* = hunting~gun), 槍聲 (*qiang sheng* = gun/gunshot~sound), 槍戰 (*qiang zhan* = gunfights). 神槍手 (*shen qiang shou* = god/miraculous~gun~hand) are master-shots.

單槍匹馬 (*dan qiang pi ma* = single~spear/gun~single~horse) describes cop/cowboy/hero fighting/ acting/ roaming alone. Traitors 槍口對內 (*qiang kou dui nei* = gun~mouth~point~to~inside = turn against friend).

Felons are 槍斃 (*qiang bi* = gun~dead = shot dead). Amid 槍林彈雨 (*qiang lin dan yu* = gun/gunshots~forest~bullets~rain = fierce shooting), victims get 槍傷 (*qiang shang* = gun/shot~wounded), 槍殺 (*qiang sha* = gun/shot~killed). Border confrontation can cause 擦槍走火 (*ca qiang zou huo* = rub~gun~run/let~loose~fire = unintended escalated fighting).

by Diana Yue