

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 thunderstorms

泥

Pronunciation: *ni* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *nai* (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: mud, clay

泥土 (*ni tu* = mud~earth) means earth/soil. 泥地 (*ni di* = mud~ground) means unpaved mud ground. Heavy rain creates 泥濘 (*ni ning* = mud~watery-mud). Buddhist clay statues in Dunhuang are 泥塑 (*ni su* = clay~modelling).

棗泥 (*zu ni* = date~mud) = date paste for dessert. 拘泥 (*qu ni* = bound~mud) means inhibited by formalities, rules, biases. 和稀泥 (*he xi ni* = mix/blend~thin~mud) means trying to compromise incompatible elements.

泥足深陷 (*ni zu shen xian* = mud~foot/feet~deep~sunk) means locked in trouble/debts. 雲泥之別 (*yun ni zhi bie* = cloud~mud~'s~difference) means huge difference. 出污泥而不染 (*chu wu ni er bu ran* = emerge~dirty~mud~yet~not~stained) describes the lotus flower or someone morally pure/clean despite his/her sinful origin.