

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 tea

泉

Pronunciation: *quan* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *chuen* (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: spring

Tea connoisseurs 泡茶 (*pao cha* = brew~tea) with 泉水 (*quan shui* = spring~water), 雨水 (*yu shui* = rain~water), 雪水 (*xue shui* = snow~water), 井水 (*jing shui* = well~water). Poets praise 清泉 (*qing quan* = clear/unpolluted springs), 碧泉 (*bi quan* = brilliant-green~springs), 甘泉 (*gan quan* = sweet~springs = springs yielding tasty/flavoursome water).

泉眼 (*quan yan* = spring~eye) means spots where spring-water oozes from the ground. 礦泉水 (*kuang quan shui* = minerals~spring~water) = mineral water. 溫泉 (*wen quan* = warm~spring) = hot springs.

血如泉湧 (*xue ru quan yong* = blood-like~spring~ooze) describes wounds oozing blood. For many artists, love is 靈感的泉源 (*ling gan de quan yuan* = soul~feeling~'s~spring~source = source of inspiration).

by Diana Yue