

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 colours

青

Pronunciation: *qing* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *ching* (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: blue/green

青's traditional meaning covers 藍 (*lan* = blue) and 綠 (*lu* = green): 青天 (*qing tian* = blue-sky), 青菜 (*qing cai* = green-leafy-vegetables), 青山 (*qing shan* = green-hills), 綠水 (*lu shui* = blue-water), 綠燈 (*lu deng* = green-light) = green/go signal, 綠色運動 (*lu se yun dong* = green-colour-rotate-move = the green movement).

青 symbolizes youth: 青苗 (*qing miao* = green-young-shoots), 青年 (*qing nian* = green-years = youths/youthful years), 青春 (*qing chun* = green-spring = youth/splendour of youth).

青花瓷 (*qing hua ci* = blue-flower-pattern~porcelain) is the popular blue-on-white china. 雨過天青 (*yu guo tian qing* = rain-passed-sky-blue) means (1) quarrel's over, no hard feelings, (2) a light milky blue glaze in Chinese ceramics.

by Diana Yue