

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

色

Pronunciation: *se* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *sik* (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: colour

顏色 = (*yan se* = countenance~colour): 膚色 (*fu se* = skin~colour), 音色 (*yin se* = musical-note~colour = timbre), 色盲 (*se mang* = colour~blind). Unique people have 特色 (*te se* = special~colour = special character). 神色 (*shen se* = spirit~colour) = expression. 拋眼色 (*pao yan se* = throw~eye~expression) means passing someone a knowing glance.

色 = 美色 (*mei se* = beauty~colour = women's beauty/charms). Womanizers 好女色 (*hao nu se* = like~female~beauty). Men who 好男色 (*hao nan se* = like~male~beauty) like to sleep with men. 色迷迷 (*se mi mi* = colour~charmed~charmed) means lascivious-looking. Monks 戒色 (*jie se* = abstain~from~sex).

Buddhists preach 色即是空 (*se zhi shi kong* = colour/appearance~equal~is~empty): All existence is emptiness.

by Diana Yue