

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.

In Putonghua (the spoken form of Modern Standard Chinese) each *zi* is pronounced in one of four tones:

1st tone: 1 = diacritical mark — pitch: 5 to 5, highest prolonged

2nd tone: 2 = diacritical mark / pitch: 3 to 5, middle to high

3rd tone: 3 = diacritical mark U pitch: 2 to 1 to 4, low to lowest to high

4th tone: 4 = diacritical mark \ pitch: 5 to 1, highest to lowest)

To pronounce each *zi* below, follow its pinyin and the given tone number. Light-sound words, which have no definite pitch, carry no diacritical mark and are marked by 0.

This week: Words about The Water Margin



Putonghua pronunciation: *bao4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *paau3*

Meanings: leopard

豹 (radical 豸 *zhi4*, animal/insect) = leopard: 金錢豹 (*jin1 qian2 bao4* = gold-coin~leopard = 花豹 *hua1 bao4* = flower/spotted~leopard), 黑豹 (*hei1 bao4* = black~leopard = panther), 獵豹 (*lie4 bao4* = hunting~leopard = cheetah), 雪豹 (*xue3 bao4* = snow~leopard).

豹隱 (*bao4 yin3* = leopard-vanish) describes veteran withdrawn from publicity. 豹死留皮 (*bao4 shi3 liu2 pi2* = leopard~dies~leaves~skin) = leaving name/legacy after exiting career.

In The Water Margin, 林沖 (*Lin2 Chong1*), nicknamed 豹子頭 (*bao4 zi0 tou2* = leopard~diminutive~head = leopard-head), was head of the royal guards but was 陷害 (*xian4 hai4* = trap~harm = framed), 充軍 (*chong1 jun1* = fill~army = exiled and sent into the army). After being rescued, he joined the 108 bandits.