

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 myths and legends

妖

(radical 女 *nu* = woman)

Pronunciation: *yao* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *yi* (Cantonese, 2nd tone)

Basic meaning: evil

妖 = evil/evil-being 妖魔 (*yao mo* = evil-demons), 妖婦 (*yao fu* = evil-woman/witch), 妖術 (*yao shu* = evil-methods = black magic).

Plants/animals can 修煉 (*xiu lian* = practice-burn-refine = do mystical exercises), absorb sun/moon's 精華 (*jing hua* = essence-splendour = mystical energy), become 精 (*jing* = non-human beings with human forms). In the novel 西遊記 (*Xi You Ji* = west-travel-record = Journey To The West), pilgrim monk Tripitaka met/vanquished/converted many 妖精 (*yao jing* = evil-fairy-beings): 蜘蛛精 (*zhi zhu jing* = spider-women-fairies), 白骨精 (*bai gu jing* = white-bone/skeleton-fairy), made 豬精 (*zhu jing* = pig-fairy) his disciple.

Trans-sexuals/"ladyboys" are derogatorily called 人妖 (*ren yao* = human-evil-fairies). Heretics 妖言惑眾 (*yao yan hua zhong* = evil-speech-deceive-people).

by Diana Yue