

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: *dao4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *do6*

Meanings: robber, bandit

Verb 盜 = 盜竊 (*dao4 qie4* = rob~steal), 盜取 (*da4 qü3* = steal~take). 盜用公款 (*dao4 yong4 gong1 kuan3* = steal~use~public~funds) = commit embezzlement.

Noun 盜 = 盜賊 (*dao4 zei2* = robber~thief): 大盜 (*da4 dao4* = big~robbers/bandits), 海盜 (*hai3 dao4* = sea~robbers = pirates), 盜版 (*dao4 ban3* = pirated~edition). 欺世盜名 (*qi1 shi4 dao4 ming2* = deceive~world~steal~name/reputation) describes hypocrites/cheats enjoying undeserved reputation.

The Water Margin praised 梁山泊 (*liang2 shan1 bo1* = Liang-Mountain-Marsh)'s 一百零八條好漢 (*yi1 bai2 ling2 ba1 tiao2 hao3 han4* = one~hundred~zero~eight~lines~good~men = 108 good/valiant men/fighters). In old China it was 禁書 (*jin4 shu1* = banned~book) because it 誨盜 (*hui4 dao4* = instruct/teach~robber = taught people to become robbers).

by Diana Yue