

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 Jonah and the whale

抗

Putonghua pronunciation: *kang4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *kong3*

Meanings: resist, object, oppose

抗 (radical 扌 = 手 *shou3*, hand/arm + 亢 *kang4*, high/excited) means 抵抗 (*di3 kang4* = ward-off~resist), 反抗 (*fan3 kang4* = rebel-resist-against). Dissidents 抗議 (*kang4 yi4* = resist-discuss = raise protests), 違抗 (*wei2 kang4* = disobey-resist = disobey) orders, launch 抗爭 (*kang4 zheng1* = resist-quarrel = fights/opposition).

抗癌藥 (*kang4 ai4 yao4* = resist-cancer~medicine) = cancer-fighting drug. 抗日戰爭 (*kang4 ri4 zhan4 zheng1* = resist-Japanese~war-quarrel) = China's war of resistance against Japanese invasion, 1937-1945.

Hebrew Bible told how 先知約拿 (*xian1 zhi1 yue4 na2* = early-know~"Jonah"-transliterated = the prophet Jonah) 抗拒 (*kang4 ju4* = resisted-refused = rejected) God's command to preach to the citizens of 尼尼微城 (*ni2 ni2 wei1 cheng2* = "Niniveh"-transliterated~city = Nineveh).