

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 jewelry

Pronunciation: *yu* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *yuk* (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: jade, jadeite

Chinese men/women wear 玉珮 (*yu pei* = jade-
pendants) because jade symbolizes moral purity/
perfection. Jade has lustre: 白玉 (*bai yu* = white-
jade), 紅玉 (*hong yu* = red-jade), 黃玉 (*huang yu* =
yellow-jade). 溫潤如玉 (*wen run ru yu* = warm-
moisture-enriched-like-jade) describes kind/
gentlemanly personality.

翡翠 (*fei cui* = red-jade-green-jade = brilliant-deep-
green jadeite) jewelry e.g. 玉鐲 (*yu zhuo* = jade-
bracelets) can cost millions. 翠玉白菜 (*cui yu bai cai*
= green-jade-white-cabbage) is a jadeite sculpture in
the Palace Museum, Taipei.

玉女 (*yu nu* = jade-woman) means pure sweet-
looking girl. 玉樹臨風 (*yu shu lin feng* = jade-tree-
facing-wind) describes tall handsome men. 守身如玉
(*shou shen ru yu* = keep/defend-body-like-jade)
describes man/woman who resists temptation and
keeps integrity/virginity.

by Diana Yue