

Character Builder 您好學? 呀

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 antiques

偽

Putonghua pronunciation: *wei3*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ngai6*

Meaning: fake, false, untrue, sham, hypocritical, forged, unauthentic, illegitimate

偽 (亻 = 人 *ren2*, person + 為 *wei2*, do/make) means 虛偽 (*xu1 wei3* = pretense-falsehood). Spy 偽造 (*wei3 zao4* = false-make = fakes) passport, works under 偽裝 (*wei3 zhuang1* = false-make-up = camouflage). 偽君子 (*wei3 jun1 zi0* = false-honorable-man = hypocrite) 偽善 (*wei3 shan4* = pretends-to-be-kind/righteous), uses 偽鈔 (*wei3 chao1* = faked-banknotes).

In WWII Japanese invaders supported Wang Zhaoming's 偽政府 (*wei3 zheng4 fu3* = illegal-administration-bureau = collaborative government, 1940-45) and Pu Yi's 偽滿洲國 (*wei3 Man3 Zhou1 Guo2* = illegitimate-Man-churia-state = Japanese "Manchukuo", 1932-45).

Painting carries 偽冒 (*wei3 mao4* = false-pretend = imitated) signature. Expert examines its 真偽 (*zhen1 wei3* = true-false = authenticity), pronounces it is 偽品 (*wei3 pin3* = faked-item).

by Diana Yue