

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 romantic love

情

Putonghua pronunciation: *qing2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *ching4*

Meanings: emotion, love, amour, sympathy, empathy, kindness

情 (radical ↑ = 心 *xin1*, heart) denotes emotion/love/kindness: 心情 (*xin1 qing2* = heart's~feelings/moods), 感情 (*gan3 qing2* = sense~feeling = attachment to person/pet/place), 情慾 (*qing2 yu4* = emotion~lust).

愛情 (*ai4 qing2* = love~feeling) = romantic love. Romeo is 多情 (*duo1 qing2* = much~love = amorous/romantic). 元宵 (*yuan2 xiao1* = first~eve, i.e. 15th day of first lunar month) is Chinese 情人節 (*qing2 ren2 jie2* = lovers~festival), celebrated with 花燈會 (*hua1 deng1 hui4* = flowery/colorful~lanterns~parade).

Pessimists think fate is 無情 (*wu2 qing2* = no~love = heartless/harsh/cruel). But good people have 人情味 (*ren2 qing2 wei4* = human~feeling~taste = consideration/kindness), show us that 人間有情 (*ren2 jian1 you3 qing2* = human~territory~has~love = there is love in the world).

by Diana Yue