

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 Narcissus



Putonghua pronunciation: *lian4*

Cantonese pronunciation: *luen2*

Meanings: love, endearment, attachment, unwillingness to forget, leave, abandon

戀 (radical 心 *xin1*, heart) means 依戀 (*yi1 lian4* = lean-love = emotional attachment): 戀家 (*lian4 jia1* = love-home = love staying home), 初戀 (*chu4 lian4* = first-love), 戀人 (*lian4 ren2* = love-person = lover). Man and woman 談戀愛 (*tan2 lian4 ai4* = talk-endear-love = date/have love relationship).

Tough politician 戀棧 (*lian4 zhan4* = love-inn/post = won't step down), 戀戰 (*lian4 zhan4* = love-battle = continues fighting/battling others). 同性戀 (*tong2 xing4 lian4* = same-sex-love) = homosexuality/lesbianism. 戀物狂 (*lian4 wu4 kuang2* = love-objects~madness) = erotic fetishism.

Echo 單戀 (*dan4 lian4* = one-way~love = unrequitedly loves) Narcissus, who 痴戀 (*chi1 lian4* = madly~loves) his own reflection. 自戀狂 (*zi4 lian4 kuang2* = self-love~madness) = narcissism.