

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 Chinese national anthem

Putonghua pronunciation: *nu2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *no4*

Meanings: high, dangerous, menacing, endanger, danger, dying

奴 shows 女 (*nü3*, woman) + 又 (= 手 *shou3*, hand/snatched). Slave-masters 奴役 (*nu2 yi4* = slave-labor = enslave/oppress) 家奴 (*jia1 nu2* = domestic~slaves), 農奴 (*nong2 nu2* = farm~slaves/ serfs), 黑奴 (*hei1 nu2* = black~slaves). In WWII Japanese invaders made Chinese/Korean women 性奴 (*xing4 nu2* = sex~slaves)

洋奴 (*yang2 nu2* = across-ocean/foreigner't~slave = Chinese who kow-tow to westerners) demonstrate 奴性 (*nu2 xing4* = slavish/self-debasing~nature). 房奴 (*fang2 nu2* = house~slave), 車奴 (*che1 nu2* = car~slave) mean low-income worker slaving/toiling away to buy house/car.

Chinese national anthem rallies 不願做奴隸的人們 (*bu4 yuan4 zuo4 nu2 li4 de0 ren2 men2* = no~willing~to-be~slaves~'s~people = those who don't want to be slaves) to 反抗 (*fan3 kang4* = rebel-against-resist) oppression.

by Diana Yue