

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 Peach Blossom Fount

Putonghua pronunciation: *yü2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *yue4*

Meanings: to fish, fisherman

Verb 漁 (𩺰), water-drops + 魚 *yü2*, fish) means 捕魚 (*bu4 yü2* = catch~fish). 漁民 (*yü2 min2* = fishing~people = fishermen) operate 拖網漁船 (*tuo1 wang3 yü2 chuan2* = drag-net~fishing-vessel = trawlers), bring in 漁穫 (*yü2 huo4* = fishing~harvest = catch).

Womanizers 漁色 (*yü2 se1* = fish/catch~color = exploit girls). Mercenary people 漁利 (*yü2 li4* = fish/catch~profit = seek profit/self-interest). Old Chinese rural population featured 漁樵耕讀 (*yü2 qiao2 geng1 du2* = fish-cut-trees~farm~read = fishermen, woodcutters, farmers, candidates studying for bureaucratic exams).

Legend says 漁夫 (*yü2 fu1* = fisher~man) discovered 世外桃源 (*shi4 wai4 tao2 yüan2* = world-outside/beyond~peach~source = peaceful village sheltered behind peach-trees near a stream's source, in a forgotten corner of the world).

by Diana Yue