

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 the Boxer Uprising

強

Putonghua pronunciation: *qiang2*

Cantonese pronunciation: *cheung2*

Meanings: powerful

強 = strong/powerful: 強烈 (*qiang2 lie4* = strong~powerful) blow, 強勁 (*qiang2 jing4* = strong~forceful) gale, 強調 (*qiang2 diao4* = strong~tone = emphasize), 強迫 (*qiang2 po3* = strongly~press/force). 女強人 (*nu3 qiang2 ren2* = female~strong~person) = successful career woman.

強盜 (*qiang2 dao4* = strong~robber) = bandit. 強姦 (*qiang2 jian1* = force~rape) = rape. Robin Hood 鋤強扶弱 (*chu2 qiang2 fu2 ruo4* = hoe/eradicate~strong~support~weak = punish oppressors to help oppressed).

Pre-Revolution China 外強中乾 (*wai4 qiang2 zhong1 gan1* = outside~strong~inside~dried-up = was weak behind strong appearance), tried 富國強兵 (*fu4 guo2 qiang2 bing1* = rich~country~strong~army = boosting national wealth and military strength) to resist 西方列強 (*xi1 fang1 lie4 qiang2* = west~direction~row-of~strong = western powers).

by Diana Yue