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.

This week: Words about books


作品 (zuo pin = work-item/product) = work/opus: 原作 (yuan zuo = original-works), 譯作 (yi zuo = translated-works), 名作 (ming zuo = famous-works).

Rebels 作反 (zuo fan = do-reverse/overtturn = revolt). Kids 作弄 (zuo nong = do-play = play tricks on) teachers. 天作之合 (tian zuo zhi he = heaven-created~’s-union) describes well-matched couples/partners.

by Diana Yue