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 cartoons

Verb 畫 hua = draw/paint. Noun 畫 = 圖畫 (tu hua) = picture-painting. 畫家 (hua jia = paint-masters) means painters. 畫像 (hua xiang = painting~ resemblance) means portraits. 畫廊 (hua lang = painting-corridor = art galleries) hold 畫展 (hua zhan = painting-exhibits).

西洋畫 (xi yang hua = west-ocean-painting) means western-style painting, 中國畫 (zhong guo hua = middle-kingdom~painting) means Chinese-style painting. 水墨畫 (shui mo hua = water-ink-painting) is traditional Chinese painting done with brush and ink-wash on silk/paper.

眉目如畫 (mei mu ru hua = eyebrows~eyes~ resemble~ painting) describes a woman’s beautiful eyes and brows. 畫龍點睛 (hua long dian jing = paint-dragon~dot-eyes/pupils = giving the dragon eyes) means adding the final, most illuminating touch/words to a painting/description/comment.

Pronunciation: hua (Putonghua, 4th tone), wa (Cantonese 2nd tone)
Basic meaning: drawing, painting

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