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 tea

清 = 清潔 (qing jie) = clean/clear/pure: 清茶 (qing cha = plain-tea), 清湯 (qing tang = clear-soup). 清醒 (qing xing = clear-awoke = clear-headed) people have 清楚 (qing chu = clear-neat = unconfused) ideas. 清唱 (qing chang = pure-sing) means singing without instrumental accompaniment. 天朗氣清 (tian lang qi qing = sky-bright-air-clean) describes a fine day.

清 is opposite of 俗 (su = vulgar). 眉清目秀 (mei qing mu xiu = eyebrows~ sparsely-arched-eyes-elegant) makes a photogenic face. Fresh young girls look 清麗 (qing li = pure-lovely). 清談 (qing tan = pure-talk) means conversation avoiding heated topics.

清算 (qing shuan = clear-sum-up/calculate) means purge. 種族清洗 (zhong zu qing xi = species-race-clean-wash) is ethnic cleansing.

Pronunciation: qing (Putonghua, 1st tone), ching (Cantonese 1st tone)
Basic meaning: clean, clear, plain, pure