Character Builder 您好嗎？放

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 1949 Liberation

放 = 放手 (fang4 shou3 = release-hand/control = let go): 放下 (fang4 xia4 = put-down) burden, 放棄 (fang4 qi4 = let-go-drop = give up), 放羊 (fang4 yang2 = let-loose/tend/sheep/goats), 放火 (fang4 huo3 = release-fire = commit arson).

Playboy 放縱 (fang4 zong4 = release-let-loose = indulges himself). Rape victim screams: “放開我!” (fang4 kai1 wo3 = let-free-I = Let me go!) After kidnappers 放人 (fang4 ren2 = release-person/hostage), everyone 放心 (fang4 xin1 = put-down-heart = feels relieved).

Decades after 解放 (jie3 fang4 = untie-free = Liberation), China 開放門戶 (kai1 fang4 men2 hu4 = open-ajar-door-panels = lifts restrictions), 放眼世界 (fang4 yan3 shi4 jie4 = cast-eyes-world-territory = casts eyes/vision on the whole wide world).

by Diana Yue