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 swindlers

瞞 (radical 目 mu = eye) = 隱瞞 (yin man = vanish-withhold-from) = conceal truth/facts. 瞞過 (man guo = withhold-from-pass) someone = successfully avoid telling him. 隱瞞病情 (yin man bing qing = vanish-withhold-from-ill-situation) = not telling patient/others how ill patient is.

Cheats 瞞騙 (man pian = withhold-cheat = lie to, mislead) others, 瞞上欺下 (man shang qi xia = hide-above-deceive-below = hide facts from superiors, misinform subordinates). 兩頭瞞 (liang tou man = two-heads-withhold) describes C acting between A and B and lying to both.

Crooks 瞞神弄鬼 (man shen nong gui = deceive-gods-trick-ghosts = fool/cheat everyone). But 謊話 (huang hua = lie-words = lies) get 拆穿 (chai chuan = pulled-down-slashedi through = seen through) finally.

by Diana Yue