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 slavery

恥 = 羞恥之心 (xiu chi zhi xin = shy-shame-'s-heart) = shameful feeling. Women’s pubic mound is 恥阜 (chi bu = shame-mound), pubic hair is 恥毛 (chi mao = shame-hair).

Unkind people 恥笑 (chi xiao = shame-laugh = jeer at) beggars. Victors inflict 恥辱 (chi ru = shame-insult = humiliation) on captives. Genocides/slavery are considered 文明的恥辱 (wen ming de chi ru = civilization-'s-shame). On 国恥日 (guo chi ri = state/national-humiliation-day) a country remembers its military defeat/surrender, vows to 雪恥 (xue chi = snow/wash-away-humiliation = revenge).

Traitors are 無恥 (wu chi = not-have-shame = shameless), patriots 恥與為伍 (chi yu wei wu = ashamed-with-be-company = consider it despicable to be in their company).

by Diana Yue