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 sleep

Pronunciation: meng (Putonghua, 4th tone), mung (Cantonese, 6th tone)
Basic meaning: dream

Falling asleep = 入夢 (ru meng = enter-dream): 好夢 (hao meng = good/sweet-dreams), 惡夢 (e meng = evil/bad-dreams = nightmares). 夢想 (meng xiang = dream-think) = fantasies: 發財夢 (fa cai meng = raise/get-wealth-dream), 選美夢 (xuan mei meng = select-beauty-dream = winning beauty contest). 做白日夢 (zuo bai ri meng = make-white-day-dream) = daydreaming.

Somnambulists 夢遊 (meng you = dream-tour = sleepwalk). Young men 夢遗 (meng yi = dream-spermatorrhea = ejaculate sperms in sleep). 同床異夢 (tong chuang yi meng = share-bed-different-dreams) describes couples having different aspirations/secrets.

The legend 黃粱夢 (huang liang meng = yellow-millet-dream) says a man married, had children, became rich/powerful all in a short dream while millet was cooked for dinner.

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