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 maps

尋找 (xun zhao = seek-search) = look for, 尋獲 (xun huo = seek-get) = find. After unsuccessfully 尋訪 (xun fang = seek-visit/interview = looking for) persons, police place “尋人” (xun ren = seek-person) advertisements. Depressed people 尋死 (xun si = seek-death = commit suicide). Negotiators 尋求 (xun qiu = seek-beg = try to find) solutions.

Travelers 尋幽訪勝 (xun you fang sheng = seek-remote-visit-scenic = seek out rare scenic places). Overseas Chinese visit their home towns to 尋根 (xun gen = find-roots). At bedtime everyone 尋夢 (xun meng = seek-dream = sleeps).

Adventurers 尋寶 (xun bao = look-for-treasure). Chaplin movie The Gold Rush is called “尋金熱” (xun jin re = hunt-for-gold-heat/fever).

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