

Character Builder 您好嗎？

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 the Cold War

Pronunciation: *leng* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *laang* (Cantonese, 5th tone)
Basic meaning: cool, cold, cool down

冷 describes temperature/character/expression/relationships: 冷酷 (*leng ku* = cold-cruel), 冷笑 (*leng xiao* = cold/sneering-smile/laugh). Disputing parties have 冷靜期 (*leng jing qi* = cool-down~quiet-period = reflection period).

冷武器 (*leng wu qi* = cold-military-instrument) = cold weapons, 火器 (*huo qi* = fire~weapons) = firearms. During 冷戰時期 (*leng zhan shi qi* = cold-war~time~era = Cold-War Period) 美蘇 (*Mei Su* = US~Soviet) developed 核武 (*he wu* = nuclear~ weapons): 火箭 (*huo zhan* = fire~arrow = rockets), 導彈 (*dao dan* = guide~bullet = guided missiles), 核彈頭 (*he dan tou* = nuclear~bullet~head = nuclear warheads). “過冷河” (*guo leng he* = pass-through~cold~stream = rinsing boiled pasta/noodles in cold water) also means retired/resigned executives' non-working/cut-off-ties period before next employment.

by Diana Yue