

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 sea creatures

鯨

Pronunciation: *jing* (Putonghua, 1st tone), *king* (Cantonese 4th tone)
Basic meaning: whale

鯨 (= 鯨魚 *jing yu* = whale~fish) means whales. Whales are mammals, not fish, so the radical 魚 (*yu* = fish) shows the pictogram-creator 掇 misconception.

鯨鬚 (*jing xu* = whale~whiskers) = baleen. 鯨肉 (*jing rou*) = whale meat. 鯨骨 (*jing gu*) = whalebone. 鯨油 (*jing you* = whale~oil/fat) = blubber. 藍鯨 (*lan jing*) = blue whales. 虎鯨 (*hu jing* = tiger~whale = 殺人鯨 *sha ren jing* = kill~person~whale = killer whale) = orca. 鯨仔 (*jing zai* = whale~young/baby) = whale calf.

捕鯨船 (*bu jing chuan* = catch~whale~ship = whaling~ship) = whalers. Melville's *Moby Dick* is translated as 白鯨記 (*bai jing ji* = white~whale~story). 鯨吞 (*jing tun* = whale~swallow) describes a giant gulping down food/resources.

by Diana Yue