

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 zoos

獸

Pronunciation: *shou* (Putonghua, 4th tone), *sau* (Cantonese, 3rd tone)
Basic meaning: wild animal, beast

獸 = 野獸 (*ye shou* = wild~animal). 獅 (*shi*, lions), 虎 (*hu*, tigers), 豹 (*bao*, leopards), 熊 (*xiong*, bears) are 猛獸 (*meng shou* = fierce beasts). Kids believe 象 (*xiang*, elephants) fear 鼠 (*shu*, mice). 熊貓 (*xiong mao* = bear~cat = panda) devolved from 食肉獸 (*shi rou shou* = eat~flesh~animal = carnivore) to 食草獸 (*shi cao shou* = eat~grass~animal = herbivore).

馬戲班 (*ma xi ban* = horse~show~troupe = circuses) hire 馴獸師 (*shun shou shi* = tame~animals~master = animal-tamers).

狼 (*lang*, wolves) symbolize cruelty, 狐 (*hu*, foxes) cunning. Killers/rapists/traitors are despicably called “禽獸!” (*qin shou*, birds-and-beasts), “畜牲!” (*chu sheng*, reared~animals). 人面獸心 (*ren mian shou xin* = human~face~beast~heart) describes evil/hypocritical humans.

by Diana Yue