

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 sleep

醒

Pronunciation: *xing* (Putonghua, 3rd tone), *sing* (Cantonese, 2nd tone)
Basic meaning: wake up, awake, sober

醒 = 醒來 (*xing lai* = wake~come = wake up) = 醒著 (*xing zhao* = awake~continuous = awake). In spring, 萬物甦醒 (*wan wu su xing* = ten-thousand~things~revive~wake = the world awakes). Hot tea/towels help drunks 酒醒 (*jiu xing* = wine/liquor~wake = clear effects of wine/liquor). 清醒 (*qing xing* = clear~awake = sober) drivers can avoid road accidents.

False hopes shattered, we 覺醒 (*jue xing* = sense~wake = become disillusioned), lament “好夢由來最易醒!” (*hao meng you lai zui yi xing* = good~dreams~since~ever~most~easy~wake = “Good dreams don’t last!”)

Prophets/cynics boast “眾人皆醉我獨醒!” (*zhong ren jie zui wo du xing* = many~people~all~drunken~I~only~sober = “I’m the only clear-headed guy!”)

by Diana Yue