

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

(radical 米 *mi* = rice grain)

糧

Pronunciation: *liang* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *leung* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: grain, pay

穀物 (*gu wu* = grain~things = grain crops) yield 糧 (= 糧食 *liang shi* = grain~for-eating): 大米 (*da mi* = big~rice = rice), 小米 (*xiao mi* = small~rice = millet), 大麥 (*da mai* = big~wheat = barley), 小麥 (*xiao mai* = small~wheat = wheat), 玉米 (*yu mi* = jade~rice = maize/corn).

During 糧荒 (*liang huang* = grain~shortage), governments issue 糧票 (*liang piao* = grain~tickets = food-rationing coupons) for buying 糧油 (*liang you* = grain~cooking-oil).

In bad times bosses may still 出糧 (*chu liang* = out~grain = issue wages/salary) to employees, but not 雙糧 (*shuang liang* = double~pay). Mindless spenders 寅吃卯糧 (*yin chi mao liang* = “yin”-year-eat-“mao”-following-year~grain = spend future income/savings) – and eventually get broke!

by Diana Yue