

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 myths and legends

神

(radical 礻 = 神 *shen* = god)
Pronunciation: *shen* (Putonghua, 2nd tone), *san* (Cantonese, 4th tone)
Basic meaning: spirit, god

Humans have 神智 (*shen zhi* = spirit~rationality/consciousness). Supernatural 神 = 神靈 (*shen ling* = god~spirit/soul): 神聖 (*shen sheng* = god~holy/sacred), 神廟 (*shen miao* = holy~temple), 神媒 (*shen mei* = gods/spirits~go-between = medium).

希臘神話 (*Xi La shen hua* = Greece-transliterated~god-talk = Greek myths/mythology) reflect 多神論 (*duo shen lun* = many~gods~theory = polytheism). Christians uphold 一神論 (*yi shen lun* = one~god~theory = monotheism), worship 耶和華 (*Ye He Hua* = Yahweh/Jehovah-transliterated). Atheism is 無神論 (*wu shen lun* = no~god~theory).

Chinese deities include human-headed-snake-bodied 伏羲 (*Fu Xi*), Taoist super-deity 玉帝 (*Yu Di* = Jade~Emperor), Buddhist bodhisattva 觀音 (*Guan Yin*), sea goddess 媽祖 (*Ma Zu* = Mother~Ancestor), King of Hell 閻王 (*Yan Wang*).

by Diana Yue