Learn & Remember 2,178 Characters and Their Meanings

Alan Hoenig, Ph.D.
Chinese Characters
Learn & Remember 2,178
Characters and Their Meanings

How to Retain the Meanings for More Than
2000 of the Most Common Characters
in Mandarin Chinese

Alan Hoenig, Ph.D.

Use an Innovative Memory Method
To Put ‘Ease’ Into ‘Chinese’!

Simplified Character Edition

EZChinesey.com
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**About the cover.** Cover design by Jim Hannan. Cover photo shows the panda couple Mei Xiang (female, left) and Tian Tian (male, right) and appears courtesy of Ann Batdorf/Smithsonian’s National Zoo.

The red Chinese characters are symbols of good luck and fortune. Reading down, here are their meanings and official pinyin phonetic transliteration: beautiful (měi), longevity (shòu), lucky (jì), wealth (cái), good fortune (fú), harmonious (hé), love (ài), virtue (dé), happiness (xǐ), and emolument (lù). The character on the spine is hóng (large, vast), the author’s Chinese surname.

The interior body types are drawn from the family of Linux Libertine fonts, designed by Philipp H. Poll. The typesetting was done by means of the XeTeX program of Jonathan Kew, itself an extension of Donald Knuth’s TeX typesetting program.
Dedicated to the memory of

BLOSSOM HOENIG
1924–2005

loving mother, iconoclast, woman of valor

人去留影
Preface

Chinese characters have been in use for thousands of years, and despite arguments that have probably raged for about the same amount of time, the Chinese people have never bothered to reform these characters in any meaningful way. Oh, sure, in the mid-50s, the People’s Republic did revamp a couple of thousand of them, thereby providing us with the so-called simplified character set (the subject of this volume), but you could argue that this step only made the situation—at least for us poor foreign students—even more burdensome. For now, it has become necessary to learn not one system, but both systems (traditional and simplified) in order to cope with mainland and overseas documents, as well as with the oceans of legacy documents that remain—older material printed before simplification.

Nevertheless, the very fact that these characters have persevered for such a long time must mean something. It means that in some allegorical and mystical sense they “want” to be learned, and indeed in my strictly empirical and anecdotal research, I’ve not run into a person brought up in China who complained about all the work it took to learn them. That’s cold comfort for us non-native speakers, and the purpose of this book is to advance a method which makes this daunting task much less so for us. Please see the ‘Read Me First!’ introduction for a fuller, far more expansive discussion of this innovative method.

I will conclude this section with a plethora of acknowledgments. First off, I must point out that many of my ideas in this presentation drew upon the earlier work of James W. Heisig and Michael Rowley dealing with Japanese kanji.

My old college chum Chris Rider possesses critical acuity that I swear is second to none. She graciously proofread the entire text, not only keeping silly errors to a minimum, but also ensuring that my little stories stay on point, remain consistent, and maintain their pedagogical integrity—a far more demanding endeavor. I am grateful beyond words.

Matters artistic were the province of Jim Hannan, who performed yeoman service in the design of the cover. If you don’t agree, you can blame me, for I’m the one who transformed it (as best I could) to electronic media.

Thanks to Web-meister (and Meistersinger) Mitch Clarvit for his expertise in setting up www.EZChinesey.com. His bemused patience in the face of my fearsome naivety had to be seen to be believed.
I fear that errors remain in this book, despite the scrupulous care I took (or attempted to take). Most of them are mine and mine alone, but not all. I relied heavily on a small handful of remarkable reference works, but they did not always agree, and not knowing whom to follow in those instances may have led me down the wrong path. The three books in this personal canon are the “Oxford Concise English-Chinese Chinese-English Dictionary” (I used the second edition); Rick Harbaugh’s “Chinese Characters: A Genealogy and Dictionary” (1998, published by Zhongwen.com; mine is the fourteenth printing); and the “Chinese-English Comprehensive Dictionary,” edited by John DeFrancis (2003, University of Hawai’i Press). These books, especially the last two, should be at hand to every serious student.

Speaking of errors, I hope that I can rely on you, gentle reader, to assist me in ruthlessly rooting them out. If you find any mistakes, or if you have suggestions for improving the stories in any panels, or any suggestions for improvement whatsoever, and if you include permission for me to use this material in any and all subsequent editions and printings, then I will cheerfully list the name of the first person who finds an error, and the names of all readers whose suggestions are incorporated into the volume. Many thanks in advance.

Without my kids Hannah and Sam, this book would have been written in half the time! Thanks, kids. Hey, Max, thank you, too. My wife, Jozefa, has been, as she has so frequently in the past, my bulwark against stupor, discouragement, crankiness, and lassitude, the four horsemen of the authorial apocalypse. More positively, she has supported and encouraged this venture with good cheer, great advice, and unstinting love.

I deeply regret my mother not living to see this volume in print. The example of her endlessly inventive creativity, nurturing care, and maternal love was a remarkable role model for myself and my siblings and, indeed, for anyone who knew her. I therefore dedicate this book to her. This one’s for you, Ma.

—Alan Hoenig
Huntington, Long Island, New York
2008 August 8, 8:08AM
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Read Me First!

...Or in other words, should I buy this book?

**EZChinesey™: the method.**

Begin by staring at some Chinese text. No matter how intense your concentration, it’s simply not possible to extract any meaning from the characters. After a while, though, you may become sensitive to differences in appearance. For example—and this is key—some characters have a simpler structure than others. Compare, for example, a pair (of admitted extremes) such as 二 and 猿.

Okay, so any one character may be more complex than any other. What’s the point?

Here’s how we can turn this observation to our advantage: Let’s decide to arrange the characters of interest—the 2000 most common—in order of their complexity. That is, we’ll arrange this list in order from simple to somewhat less simple, to more complex, to downright frightening.

So how does this help? With luck, the simplest character is so simple you can learn it instantly. Move forward to the next character in the list. If our luck continues to hold, we should be able remember this next character by means of some simple story or memory aid which relates the first character—which we learned easily—to the change we need to get to the second, current character we are focusing on.

Now keep on doing this. That is, we try to express every character as some combination of a previous simpler character plus some small change, a change so small that it’s easy to remember the current character as well. By great good fortune, this method works splendidly! (See the technical notes at the end of this introduction for additional details.) Actually, though, we have to be a little more forgiving than this statement implies. We may need to look at more than one of the previous characters, and from time to time we need to introduce into our master list some components which comprise various arrangements of strokes that aren’t themselves independent Chinese characters.
**EZChinesey™ at work: an example.**

Now let’s see how this helps us learn the meanings of the eight simplest characters. The three simplest are 一, 二, and 三, which mean ‘one’, ‘two’, ‘three’ respectively, and you’ll agree that it’s easy to learn them just as they are. It won’t always be *quite* this easy, for there aren’t any additional legal characters you can build up solely from horizontal strokes.

To move forward, we’ll need to introduce a component that provides flexibility in constructing new characters. Here’s one that looks like an upright stick: ‘丨’. Sturdy sticks are useful as primitive but effective tools, and as scepter-like symbols of authority that identify kings, politicians, and other self-important riffraff. This staff combines with bars to form new characters, and we can keep track of them by creating simple stories which combine the meanings of each component and embedded character. We show no mercy in the creation of these stories—outrageous puns, incredible settings, and striking images—in short, anything that makes it easy to remember them—are grist for our mill.

Let’s keep going to show this method in action.

The next character on our list is 十, Chinese for ‘ten’ and constructed from the single bar meaning ‘one’ and this new ‘stick’ component. It’s easy to remember this meaning, for the crossed strokes look like the ‘t’ which begins the word ‘ten’.

Now, what might you make of this character: 士, which features ‘ten’ on top of ‘one’? Someone smart enough to count backwards from ten to one would have regarded themselves as a scholar, and that’s one meaning for this character.

The *stick* can combine with 二, ‘two’, in several ways. First, imagine trying to force the stick between the two bars to keep them far apart, like this: 丕. You can do it, but it takes work, which is one meaning for this character.

In 士, ‘stick’ pierces ‘two’. Perhaps the stick is a hoe, and the bars represent the top and bottom of the layer the hoe passes through. Layer of what? Why, layers of earth, of course—and this character often means earth or soil.

Sometimes, perhaps in time of drought, the earth is so soft and powdery, that the hoe slips all the way through the earth until only its top is at the surface, like this: 十. This happens when the soil is thirsty and dry, and that’s what this character often means.
Reviewing our work.
Okay, now don’t look back. Here are the eight characters we just discussed.

一 二 三 十 口 土 干

Can you remember their meanings? I bet you did better than you expected.

**EZChinesey™: results.**

In this way, we build up the meanings for the two thousand most frequent characters. With knowledge of these meanings, you will recognize—on average—97% of all the characters in any piece of modern Chinese writing. Not bad. (In other volumes of this series, we’ll consider more characters and methods for learning how to read and pronounce characters.)

You may still have many questions, but let’s pause for an important message. We need to emphasize what **EZChinesey™ is not.** It is *not* a calligraphy manual. Nor is it an historical survey of the development of character forms from ancient times until now. These and related topics are certainly important and interesting, but you’ll need to go elsewhere to learn more. Moreover, some scholars may find that the mnemonic scenarios I use fly in the face of scholarly study—well, too bad! My goal here is a simple one, and that is to present a simple method for *remembering* Chinese characters, period.

**One character, one panel.**

Pause now to flip through this book to see how it’s organized. You’ll see a bunch of numbered panels, each of which contains information about a single character or component. Each panel deliberately displays the character or component in two font styles, so you get practice learning to recognize the character. Out in the margin, you also get the pinyin pronunciation for it.

A visual graphic lets you know what components or previous characters we use to construct *this character.* Attached to the several little squares in this display are the names of these components and panel numbers in which *they* are defined, so you can easily flip back if you need to refresh your memory. Moreover, the squares are filled in interesting ways which suggest what portion of the character is occupied by which component. For example, this display

![Display](image)


tells you that, roughly speaking, the left half of the character contains the component named ‘*man r*’, presented first in §953, and the character ‘*inch*’ from §210 appears on the right. (‘§’ is the ‘panel’ symbol; ‘§§’ means ‘panels’.) Chinese scribes build up one character that means ‘to pay’ (see §971) from these components.
The components for ‘eagle’ ($\$1006$) provide another illustration, and

- wild goose 1005 (altered)
- bird 885

shows how the allocation of space can be a bit more complex. Sometimes, components find themselves altered a bit, and the accompanying label makes that clear.

(Rarely, characters contain miscellaneous strokes that are hard to identify with any other components, and never again appear in any other character. You’ll see a descriptive label to help you make sense of its shape, but there won’t be any panel reference number to go along with it.)

The narrative scenario.

But the heart and soul of each panel is the central narrative which provides a scenario for learning and remembering its meaning. You can see how some words in this little story merit special typographic treatment. Words that use type that appears like this refer to the components—that is, the building blocks—of the current character. Words looking like this refer to the meaning of the character. In this way, you can look at the narrative and see how the parts contribute to the whole. You may have noticed that we have already used these conventions above.

Sometimes, a story line begins with the abbreviation ‘BF’ which stands for ‘bound form’. This means that the character never stands by itself, but with at least one other character that precedes or follows it. Essentially, a bound form character is only part of a Chinese word.

A little extra information appears just for fun. You learn how many pen strokes it takes to draw the character, and the frequency ranking of the character. The particle 的, pronounced ‘de’, has a frequency ranking of one; it’s the most common character in written Chinese.

Of course, components also get their own panels. The abbreviation ‘cmp’ lets you know this is a component panel, and some other typographic conventions differ slightly. Components do not have pronunciations, but do have names. Sometimes components and characters coincide. For a variety of reasons, it seems a good idea to present the item twice—once as a component, and a second time, immediately thereafter, as a character.

There’s one more convention that proves useful from time to time. An asterisk * that follows a definition flags another character with the un-asterisked definition which has appeared previously with a different character. For example, in addition to 哥, ‘elder brother’, this volume presents characters 兄 and 昆, ‘elder brother*’ and ‘elder brother**’.

Now you’re good to go. If you’d like, you’re can skip the remainder of this introduction, and start the first unit.
We’ve prepared some on-line resources to assist you. For example, at our Web-site, WWW.EZChinesey.COM, you’ll find:
- downloadable flash cards,
- review material for each unit,
- graded reading practice, and
- much more—all free.

Further discussion of this material appears on our Web site and in this volume’s Appendix. The remainder of this introduction contains more about EZChinesey™.

Exactly what does it mean to ‘learn’ a character?

This question has two answers, and both miss the mark by a bit. Should we concentrate learning the character’s pronunciation, or should its meaning be our focus?

I rejected the ‘pronunciation’ alternative for several reasons. First off, a significant minority of characters has several different pronunciations, depending on context and meaning. More important, though, is the fact that, in general, Chinese pronunciation is so different from English so as to render any memory schemes seriously deficient, for how can an English mnemonic refer to a pronunciation with no English counterpart?

We are led to the second candidate—meaning. That is, we tie our memory scheme to the meaning of each character. But even here there are difficulties. Most of the time, there is not one single meaning for each character. Other times, the character stands not for a ‘word’ in our usual sense, but for a portion of word. Sometimes, too, the character represents a special Chinese grammatical construct, for which no English equivalent occurs.

Even so, this seems to me the best method to choose. It was my intention at all times to choose the most prominent meaning for each character, although sometimes that’s a matter more of personal preference than actual Chinese usage. I found it a particular challenge to provide a correspondence between untranslatable ‘words’—particles and the like—and some reasonable English pseudo-equivalent.

Of course, how do you learn the pronunciation of each character? Other titles in the ‘EZChinesey™’ series address this important issue, but for the time being, refer to the pinyin pronunciation in the right margin.
Advantages and disadvantages of EZChinesey™.
One finding of this book is that it is possible to deconstruct virtually every character in terms of one hundred or so components. That’s certainly a lot more than the 26 letters of the English alphabet, but it’s vastly less than the figure of ‘thousands’ that unthinking instructors use to frighten would-be students of Chinese.

Nevertheless, there is one striking disadvantage to this method. The order in which we learn characters the EZChinesey™ way matches that of no known Chinese language curriculum. How could it? Language courses go from common vocabulary to challenging words (more or less). This book presents words from the visually simple to the visually complex, and the two orderings will hardly ever line up. Although it may be difficult to use this material in a traditional classroom setting, the author hopes that the ease and rapidity with which novice learners can commit meanings to memory will mitigate this problem.

Who decides what the 2000-most common characters are?
The earliest survey I know of Chinese character frequencies was made in 1928. According to it, 2000 distinct characters account for 96.5% of the text selections in this study, which comprises over 900,000 characters. Most recently, in an analysis of over 87 million characters of non-technical material, Jun Da basically reproduced this result—2000 characters account for 96.5% of the text. [Please refer to Proceedings of the Fourth International Conference on New Technologies in Teaching and Learning Chinese (edited by Pu Zhang et. al.), pp.501-11, 2004. (Beijing: Tsinghua University Press) for further details.] Moreover, there were only 8,435 distinct characters in this large sample—a far cry from the “tens of thousands” that the uninformed claim need be learned. This scholar has made his list of character frequencies available for downloading (from lingua.mtsu.edu/chinese-computing), and it is the first 2000 of these characters with which we concern ourselves in these pages. I am grateful to this researcher for allowing me to use his results.

Components versus characters.
I’ve spoken above of “characters” and “components,” but I’d like to spend a few minutes clarifying the distinction between them. Basically, if a glyph can stand by itself in a Chinese document, and be recognized as having its own pronunciation, then it’s a character. Otherwise, it’s a component, a building block for other independent characters.

You may already know about radicals, which are special types of components used by scribes to categorize all Chinese characters. Many radicals (but not all!) show up in this book as components. Radicals often appear independently as characters. For example, a common radical is 口 (it means
“mouth”), which is a character in its own right, but appears as a radical in words like 叶, 古, and many, many others.

Sometimes, when a component in the EZChineseTM method coincides in form with one of the more-or-less two hundred recognized radicals, we identify it as such with the suffix ‘r’. So while ‘man’ is 亻, the man radical ‘man r’ looks like 亻, and frequently makes an appearance in this volume as a component.

‘Words’ themselves sometimes play the role of components: 古 ‘ancient’ is part of 古; 来 ‘end, tip’ appears in 沫 and 沫; and there are numerous other instances.

Although our purpose is to present narratives for the two thousand most common characters, it was sometimes necessary to relax this restriction. It often happens that a well-defined portion of a common character contains a sub-unit which is itself an independent character, but a rare one. For example, the Chinese use 隹 to mean a generic form of short-tailed bird. However, while this character is only the 5837th most common character in use, it itself appears often in other, far more frequent characters; 堆 (meaning ‘heap up’, rank 1370), 推 (‘push’, 505), 准 (‘criterion’, 379), 惟 (‘-ism’, 1856), 椎 (‘gather’, 406), 焦 (‘burnt’, 1554), and 瞧 (‘look at’, 1551) barely scratch the surface. I deemed it closer to the spirit of this work to include ‘隹’ among the list of characters for this book. After all, even though it is rare, it still occurs from time to time, it can’t hurt to know it, and it helps learn many of its offspring. That’s why all told, this book includes narratives for 2178 characters and another hundred or so components (2280 in all).

What’s the best way use this book?
Using our method to learn characters is a skill, and skill sets improve and strengthen the more you use them. You may find the ideas of learning character meanings daunting at first—that’s why the first few units are much shorter than most of the units in this volume.

You should strive to do some of this work each day. Of course, if you stick to the book while doing this, it’s easy to wonder—are you really learning the meaning for each character (and vice versa), or are you learning to regurgitate this material in the order it appears? For that reason, I strongly recommend the use of flash cards (which can be shuffled) and other memory aids. Our Web site—forgive us for bragging one more time—contains several kinds of practice material, including flashcards, end of unit review material, and graded reading practice. Fuller discussion appears on-line and in the book’s Appendix.

I myself seem to have gravitated to a two-ply system, and I have become addicted to using flashcards for review. It’s ‘two-ply’ for while I am reviewing or learning the words in some current unit, I also review the material in a previous unit. I review a units-worth of entries in two ways. From the
definition (that is, I cover the left-hand, ‘character’ side of the cards), I try to recreate its form in my mind (actually, I tend to ‘draw’ it on the palm of one hand with the index finger of the other). Then, (after shuffling the pack of cards) while looking at the characters (this time covering the right side), I identify its definition. And I try to do this three times a day for each of the two units I am learning and reviewing.

**In conclusion...**
Learning Chinese is rewarding and challenging, but the problem of grappling with Chinese characters threatens the success of the whole endeavor. With this book, you will learn a method that takes the sweat out of learning them, a method that, well, puts the ‘ease’ into ‘Chinese’.

**Abbreviations Used**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Abbreviation</th>
<th>Meaning</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>BF</td>
<td>bound form</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CMP</td>
<td>component</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>LIT</td>
<td>literary</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>M</td>
<td>measure word</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>r</td>
<td>radical</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>SB</td>
<td>somebody</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>STH</td>
<td>something</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>V</td>
<td>variant</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Unit 1

New Beginnings

1 一 一 bar
CMP What else could this be?

2 一 一 one
Chinese tally marks are evidently horizontal rather than vertical. One such bar stands for one.
[1 STROKES  RANK 2]

3 二 二 two
One tally twice stands for two. Notice that the upper bar is shorter than the bottom one.
Sometimes this character, especially at a character’s bottom, represents two horizontals.
[2 STROKES  RANK 157]

4 三 三 three
Three bars generate the number three. Since the middle stroke is the shortest, it is natural (and important!) to interpret this symbol as one plus two.
[3 STROKES  RANK 125]

5 丨 丨 scepter
CMP This is a simple vertical stroke, and it’s helpful to assign to such primitive forms a similar shape, such as a scepter, which is what we’ll do here. The presence of a scepter often conveys impressions of authority and leadership, used as this object often is by rulers and leaders.
The scepter is a tool conferring authority, and we might sometimes regard it as a symbol of such. But sometimes, too, we’ll just regard it as a stick-like tool.
6️⃣ ️⃣ ️⃣ ️⃣ ️⃣ ️⃣ ten

1️⃣ The character ️⃣ looks like the letter ‘t’ which stands for ‘ten’. ️⃣
2️⃣ The upright *stick* in this character resembles a European ‘one’. The horizon- ️⃣tional bar of the Chinese ‘one’ closely mimics the horizontal hand motion ️⃣people use to show there’s nothing left. A ‘one’ and the ‘zero’ of ‘nothing left’ and you’ve got ️⃣, a perfect *ten*. ️⃣

When used as a component, this character will sometimes take on the meaning of ‘a good several’. ️⃣ ️⃣

[2 STROKES RANK 112]

7️⃣ ️⃣ ️⃣ labor, work

The components of ️⃣ are ️⃣ and ️⃣. Normally, though, the horizontal strokes of ️⃣ are close together. If we pry these strokes apart, and keep them propped open with our *scepter*, we have done some useful *work*. ️⃣

[3 STROKES RANK 118]

8️⃣ ️⃣ ️⃣ scholar

1️⃣ A *scholar* is someone so smart they can count backwards from *ten* to ️⃣.
2️⃣ A *scholar* combines many positive attributes—as many as *ten*—within ️⃣ individual. ️⃣

[3 STROKES RANK 372]

9️⃣ ️⃣ ️⃣ earth, soil

Our scepter has uses other than conveying authority. Now let’s use it in farming. Imagine the *earth*, and that the ️⃣ component shows *two* layers of the ground in a sideways, cut-away view. The upper stroke shows the surface, and the lower, represents the level to which we dig the hoe. Times are so tough that even the king needs to participate—even he must use his *scepter* for hoeing, and that’s what we see here. The scepter pierces the surface of the *soil* for some small distance... ️⃣

[3 STROKES RANK 515]

10️⃣ ️⃣ ️⃣ dry

...but if the soil is exceptionally *dry*, as during a drought or in the desert, the *stick* might well plunge through the *two* layers to its very tip, as we see here. ️⃣

[3 STROKES RANK 353]
Unit 2
Onion-Like Layers

11 王 王 king
Because the middle horizontal scepter is shorter than the other two, we can group the horizontals as ‘one’ followed by ‘two’. This character’s components are therefore ‘one’–‘two’–‘lead’; a king is chosen by a nation as some one to (sounds like ‘two’—get it?) lead. A scepter is a symbol of authority, and therefore of leadership.

12 丰 丰 plentiful
BF In times of abundance, or plentiful economics, a king’s authority grows and expands. In this character, his scepter overflows the bounds of the horizontal components to emphasize this abundance.

13 非 非 not
The left and right halves of 非 consist of a pair of three-toothed combs which are mirror images of each other. Each comb looks alike but they are nevertheless not equal.

14 圭 圭 jade tablet
A jade tablet was a symbol of great authority in ancient societies and possessed very great value. How do you safeguard such an item? Here’s one way—create several piles of earth and secrete it in one of them, but only you (the tribal leader) know which one.

15 且 且 moreover
Do you like this small system of shelves? With it, you can stack more stuff over each other.
16 直 \(\text{zhí}\) straight, vertical  
If we pile ten bookshelves from the definition of ‘moreover’ on top of each other, they need to be as straight and vertical as possible so they don’t topple over. Moreover, we need to add an extra horizontal ‘shelf’ to each bookcase for additional strength and support. (As if to tempt fate, the vertical shaft of 十 lists a bit to starboard in this character—look closely!)  

False identity alert: At first blush, it seems that 且 ‘moreover’ acts as a component in 直 ‘straight, vertical’. But look very closely—the stovepipe hats have different numbers of bars: 且 versus 直.

17 臣 \(\text{chén}\) subject of a ruler  
What do subjects do to acknowledge their servile status to the king? They kneel. Here’s a view from the top of one such servant. His back is to the left (next to the king’s scepter), and the servant’s head is between his kneeling legs. The two short verticals represent his knees, which are all you can see of his legs.

18 巨 \(\text{jù}\) huge  
(In the schematic, gray indicates removal or subtraction or minor alteration of some elements.) If you’ve ever gone off a diet, you know the ‘overshoot’ effect at first hand. Not only do you regain—instantly—all your lost weight, but you overshoot the mark and now weigh more than you did originally. In the same way, when we erase the vertical ‘knee’ marks (of §17) to show that the subject is standing up, in some magical way, he overshoots his original height to become huge.

19 五 \(\text{wǔ}\) five  
Here’s the profile of a royal throne, and we see the supports for the five major limbs of the queen—supports for the head, two arms, and two feet.
20 互 互 mutual

Look carefully to see the stylized arm reaching down to grab a second arm reaching up to grab it. Imagine they are giving each other mutual assistance.

[4 STROKES  RANK 819]
Unit 3
Curiouser and Curiouser

21 山山 mountain
Three peaks form one mountain.

22 出出 exit
Although this character looks like it has some connection to 山, it’s better to focus on the five vertical strokes, which have the appearance of bony fingers. In fact, when you stare at it, 出 resembles a hand, highly contorted perhaps, like that of the wicked queen in the guise of the hag who beckoned Snow White out of the dwarfs’ cottage, persuading her to exit from the safety of the room and so to her fate.

23 击击 strike
BF Earth from a mountain is a landslide—it strikes with great force.

24 钩钩 hooked stick
CMP The long vertical ‘scepter’ stroke of the preceding panels sometimes appears with a hook. In this context, the vertical can refer to something hook-like, but sometimes the hook acts as an ‘abbreviation’ sign. That is, the hooked vertical will remind you of a more elaborate shape.
UNIT 3, §§25–29  
CURIOUSER AND CURIOUSER

25 四 四 fourth  
(The definition here refers to 'fourth in a series of items or fourth in a list'.)  
This shape reminds me of the special hook-like keys you use to open one can of sardines. With the layers of cramped fish finally exposed, they are free to go forth (sounds like fourth) for your gustatory delight.

We will sometimes use this shape to refer to a platform or table, because that's what it looks like.

26 于 于 in; at; to  
Prepositions are the worst part of learning foreign languages—they never translate cleanly, which is why we must append three meanings to 于. How do you even visualize prepositional relationships? Here's our hook—we've already compared two horizontals to the surface of dry earth (see §10), but the hook helps lock the stick in place or at our location. Furthermore, the 'two' strokes which indicate the earth sound like to.

27 手 手 hand  
The hooked stick is shorthand for an entire arm; the hook is the elbow, but only the forearm is explicitly drawn. The three horizontal strokes are the stylized fingers of the hand, so stylized that no one cares that we show six fingers!

28 拜 拜 do obeisance, salute  
Is this character evidence for subtle subversion on the part of ancient scribes? Observe a slightly disfigured left hand performing a salute to a trumped-up king—too many chevrons and a scepter threatening to drop out of the frame.

29 手 手 hand r  
When the character 手 appears as a component in another character, it takes this somewhat abbreviated and distorted form—now there are only four fingers! (Or perhaps there are five—the four ends of the more-or-less horizontal strokes, and the upper protruding end of the central hook.)
If you take your hand and hang the jade tablet which symbolizes our leadership and power, then everyone can inspect it and render proper respect to you.

Sometimes, when we use a character as a component, it suffers mild distortion. For example,

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{土} \\
\text{王} \\
\text{丁}
\end{array}
\]

becomes

\[
\begin{array}{c}
\text{凡} \\
\text{王} \\
\text{丁}
\end{array}
\]

Sometimes, though, the distortion is more severe. We will draw your attention to instances of these disfigurations by including the word ‘altered’ in the label that identifies the component.
Unit 4
Action and Inaction

31 拒拒 resist or repel  hand r 29 huge 18 jù
BF The giant’s hand is huge. With it, it’s easy for him to resist and repel his enemies. [7 STROKES RANK 1331]

32 排排 put in order  hand r 29 not 13 pái
The straight lines of ‘not’ suggest the ordered arrangement of soldiers who are drilling. Here’s a young boy using his hand to put his toy soldiers in order. And in fact another meaning for ‘pái’ is ‘platoon’. [11 STROKES RANK 682]

33 打打 hit  hand r 29 fourth 25 dǎ
The hand (on the left) is clutching the ‘fourth’ component on the right, which we earlier compared to a metal key, as if it were a pair of brass knuckles. We are getting ready to hit someone with a vengeance. What’s the point of fighting if you’re not going to win? [5 STROKES RANK 223]

34 boar’s head  CMP The design emphasizes the stiff bristles that cover a boar’s head.

35 扫扫 sweep  hand r 29 boar’s head 34 sǎo
Officially, the right component represents a boar’s head, but we’ll interpret it as the bottom of a broom, which is what it looks like! After all, we have to put these stiff bristles to good use. We see a hand holding a broom getting ready to sweep. [6 STROKES RANK 1435]
36 彗 彗  broom  

I’m a champion sweeper, and I wear out brooms plenty fast. The bristles come from a boar’s head, and I use an abundance of them.  

[11 STROKES  RANK 3591]

37 丑 丑  hideous  

The underlying ‘boar’s head’ is a variant of the form shown above in §34. Wild, feral boars are far more hideous and frightening than their domestic cousins. This character shows one so ancient and mighty that a giant fang extends upward from his horizontal jaw to the top of his head. The fangs are weapons and, like a scepter, a symbol of his authority within the pack.  

[4 STROKES  RANK 1901]

38 扭 扭  twist, wrench  

Twisting and especially wrenching are ugly motions, often accompanied by ugly emotion. It’s not surprising that a hand accompanied by ugliness has this meaning.  

[7 STROKES  RANK 1805]

39 聘 聘  pen, writing instrument  

There are a total of five horizontal strokes in this rare character, representing five fingers holding the vertical pen. The first and third fingers are linked, to emphasize that the first three fingers of a hand are the strongest and most dexterous.  

[6 STROKES  RANK 3526]

40 囗 囗  enclosure  

Normally, only 囗 contains additional elements inside it; 囗 never does.  

41 口 口  mouth  

Almost everyone already knows this is a stylized representation of an actual mouth. It’s square rather than round because the calligraphy brush made circular curves difficult to execute, but it represents a small enclosure. It’s often useful to imagine that 口 represents a speaking person, or sometimes just a person. It’s only possible to reliably distinguish 口 from 口 when they’re next to each other.  

[3 STROKES  RANK 212]
Here, a lonely man imprisoned in an enclosure uses his mouth to signal his distress, his desire to return home to friends and family.

Bamboo pitch pipes are flute-like things we blow into to get a pure musical tone. Here are two of the holes—mini-mouths, so to speak.

Here is a stylized crowd of merchants, represented by their mouths. They are busy hawking the products they have for sale.

An enclosure—a small pen—pierced by a scepter through the middle nicely illustrates this concept.

Here’s a grisly tale—natives from a cannibal isle take their shrunken heads, symbolized by a pair of mouths, and use a small pole or scepter, to string them together.

A skilled orator can express herself on any subject—figuratively speaking, ten words emerge effortlessly from her mouth.

You can think of the ‘田’ part as the portcullis on a medieval castle. Someone has just raised the central vertical to let you walk through.
Unit 5

Moving and Standing Still

49 抽 抽 take out  
The vertical on the right looks for all the world like a thorn embedded in a hand or a paw. The fingers of the 'hand' on the left are about to take out this offending object by clamping on it.  

50 甲 甲 first in a series  
A protest rally is getting under way. You are at the head of the line holding a sign which looks just like this character. You hold it by its long handle, so people can read it. It lets them know to stand behind you. You are first in the series of ten marchers, all of whom are loudmouths.  

51 古 古 ancient  
This character shows ten mouths. Mouths next to each other in time (rather than space) can represent generations. Thus, something like ten generations ago is ancient.  

52 叶 叶 leaf  
If you rotate 古 (§51) by ninety degrees, you get this character, 叶 ‘leaf’. The rotation means ten mouths in space, not time, ten people (‘mouths’) clamoring for food. Fortunately, there’s enough—to the host’s relief (sound like leaf).  

53 固 固 solid  
Ancient ruins, surrounded or protected by an enclosure must be pretty solid to have lasted this long.
54 咕 咕 cluck
For some ancient people, the sounds from their mouths often resemble muttering or the clucks of chickens. [8 STROKES RANK 2418]

55 吐 吐 spit
From your mouth to the earth—that pretty much sums up the act of spitting. [6 STROKES RANK 1653]

56 吉 吉 lucky
BF The words from a scholar’s mouth are considered lucky. I assume this is a scholar’s definition of luck! [6 STROKES RANK 856]

57 田 田 field
Officially, this pictograph represents a field with irrigation ditches. In keeping with our methods, it’s better to think of a cultivated field as an enclosure containing any number of crops, perhaps ten or so. [5 STROKES RANK 778]

58 呈 呈 appear
In ancient societies, kings were often isolated from their subjects. Their appearance for ceremonial or ritual purposes would have been a key event in ancient life, so it makes sense to use this event to stand for the verb appear. The mouth represents the physical features of the king. [7 STROKES RANK 1563]

59 扣 扣 to button
Here, you use your hand to button the button, which looks like nothing so much as a doll’s mouth. [6 STROKES RANK 1625]
60 可 can; may mouth 41 kě
Children’s tales often involve an important character who succeeds in a task only after several trials. A big, bad wolf, for example, may need several attempts to huff and puff to blow a house down. Here, only after the expulsion of a mighty breath from its mouth on the fourth attempt can the wolf succeed in his demolition work.

可 often appears as part of another character. Then, it will often receive the interpretation of ‘ability’, the noun referred to by can and may.

61 呵呵 breathe out mouth 41 can; may 60 hē
Breathing out is one of a mouth’s special abilities.

62 哥哥 elder brother can; may 60 (altered) can; may 60 gé
1 BF If you have an elder brother, you know it’s not an easy life, especially when you’re young. Lots of fights break out, so you really need physical a double dose of ability to survive.
2 Elder brothers are frustrating creatures. Since they’re older than you, they have so many more abilities.

63 日 day, sun enclosure 40 one 2 rì BF A stylized pictograph of the sun. A day encloses one major time period.

64 日日 speak mouth 41 one 2 yuē
1 One mouth is used for speaking.
2 The horizontal line represents the expulsion of breath when speaking.

65 旦 dawn day, sun 63 one 2 dàn How can you help but see the sun rising above the horizon line at dawn?
BF No matter what the terrain, the earth at dawn appears flat.
Unit 6
Up and Down

67 担 担 undertake
Undertaking the tasks of daily life begins early. At dawn, people begin using their hands to perform their various chores.

68 旧 旧 old; bygone
An aged leader, with her scepter as symbol of authority, has seen many days and reflects on past, bygone times.

69 昌 昌 flourishing
BF Merchants flourish when they speak a lot. Their sales pitches nail their deals.

70 早 早 morning
1 The sun is jauntily perched on a ten—it’s 10:00, a frabjous time to finally begin the morning.
2 The horizontal line of the ‘ten’ component represents ground level. The vertical stroke is a flower stalk, on top of which sits a sun-flower bud. In the morning, the bud opens and prepares to follow the sun.

71 里 里 inside
Inside a field’s soil are the roots of a goodly number of crops.
72 埋 埋 bury earth, soil 9 inside 71 mái
When are you part of the earth’s insides? When they come to bury you!
[10 STROKES RANK 1640]

73 理 理 rational king 11 inside 71 lǐ
How does a king get to be in charge, at least in theory? The king’s insides supposedly endow him with superior logic and rationality, so much so that he deserves our fealty.
[11 STROKES RANK 89]

74 哩 哩 enumeration mouth 41 inside 71 lì
I’ve chosen a slightly non-standard use for this glyph. The enumeration I refer to has to do with listing items:

Yīngwén lì, Déwén lì, Fàwén lì, tā dōu huì shuō.
He can speak English, German, and French.

When speaking, you enumerate items by speaking each item (with your mouth, naturally) as it bubbles up from within (inside) you.
[10 STROKES RANK 1949]

75 唱 唱 sing mouth 41 flourishing 69 chàng
It’s possible to think of song as enhanced speaking, that is, the expressive powers of the singing mouth have flourished beyond normal.
[11 STROKES RANK 1252]

76 晶 晶 crystal day, sun 63 jīng
BF The light on the facets of a crystal, so bright and brilliant, looks just like several suns.
[12 STROKES RANK 1725]

77 量 量 measure dawn 65 inside 71 liáng
At the break of dawn, visibility improves inside your room, making it easy to measure things by natural light.
[12 STROKES RANK 241]
**78** 目 目 eye

The *two enclosures* in the upper half of your head are your *eyes*. Also, you can imagine yourself taking an open *eye*, turning it on its end, and simplifying all curves to horizontal and vertical segments, to get 目.

[5 STROKES  RANK 239]

**79** 冒 冒 brave

It’s easy for a soldier to be *brave* when he is *helmeted* in such a way to protect his *two eyes*. (We have no component called ‘helmet’, but to me, this seems an obvious piece of imagery.)

[9 STROKES  RANK 1222]

**80** 盯 盯 stare

A *stare* is a fixed gaze, in which one person *hooks* you with his *eye*. (Here, we are decomposing the 丁 component of §25 into its components.)

[7 STROKES  RANK 1906]

**81** 吾 吾 me

I don’t know about you, but my head, with its *five ‘mouths’* or orifices (two ears, two nostrils, mouth) is the essence of *me*, the center of consciousness.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1649]

**82** 耳 耳 ear

Ears and eyes are the main sensory receptors of a person. The *ear* is shown here as a slightly deformed *eye*. The horizontal extensions emphasize the additional external structures that surround our *ears*. The lower vertical stroke on the right is the earlobe of the right *ear*.

[6 STROKES  RANK 887]

**83** 而 而 express add’l but contrasting info

Think of this diagram as a sketch whereby the little ‘dab’ connects two contrasting forms, the smooth *horizontal* surface on the top, and the rough, beard-like form below it. Consequently, we’ll use this character to express *contrast*.

Also, an *eye*, subject to rotation and gross alteration, surveys the *horizon*. All kinds of stuff are visible, similar and contrasting.  

[6 STROKES  RANK 36]
BF 84 Regard this character as a triptych of mirrors, perhaps on a lady’s dressing table. The topmost stroke is a light bar connected to the top of the mirrors. The lady of the house faces the mirrors and can inspect any of three aspects of her reflection.

miàn
Unit 7
From Side to Side

85 雨 雨 rain
express add'l but contrasting info 83 (altered) drops of rain yǔ
1. What a contrast with yesterday! It was bright sun yesterday—today it’s pouring rain!
2. Look at the driving rain outside the dual windows. (It’s a double window, with a long decorative sill on top.) [8 STROKES RANK 928]

86 雷 雷 thunder
rain 85 field 57 léi
It’s not enough to have rain to water the crops in the fields. The rainfall must be intense, otherwise you tease the crops but don’t let them grow. Typically, intense rainstorms, sufficiently intense to nourish the fields, are accompanied by thunder, so this character is fitting for this natural noise. [13 STROKES RANK 686]

87 雪 雪 snow
rain 85 boar’s head 34 xuě
1. Here’s precipitation lying in white layers on the ground. Can’t be rain, so it must be snow.
2. Here’s precipitation that needs sweeping away with my boar’s head broom. It’s snow! [11 STROKES RANK 1003]

88 需 需 needs, requirements
express add'l but contrasting info 83 xū
BF Rain often marks a contrast with previous conditions. Moreover, once it starts raining, you will need other stuff—hats, umbrellas, boots, raincoat—to stay comfortable, so this is a good way to indicate needs and requirements. [14 STROKES RANK 408]
89 瑞 瑞 auspicious
- king 11
- mountain 21
- express add'l but contrasting info 83

BF The right pair of components combines soaring *mountains* seemingly connected to a *contrasting* image, roots firmly anchored underground. The Chinese people must have felt that the ideal king combines lofty ideals—*mountains*—with down-to-earth practicality, symbolized by the roots. A king thus endowed would surely have an auspicious reign.

[13 STROKES RANK 1332]

90 喘 喘 gasp for breath
- mouth 41
- mountain 21
- express add'l but contrasting info 83

BF Consider a *mountain* and its *contrast*, the valley down below, and suppose you run like the wind from the *mountain* down to the other. Through your *mouth*, you'll be *gasp* ing for breath.

Could the gasping be due to asthma? *Asthma* is another meaning for this character.

[12 STROKES RANK 1977]

91 押 押 mortgage, pawn, give as security
- hand 29
- first in a series 50

Before I get a bank loan, I *hand* over the item that's *first* in my affections, as a guarantee they get their money back. This is the essence of pledging collateral or mortgaging your house.

[8 STROKES RANK 1775]

92 聽 聽 speak up!

CMP Here’s someone cupping their ear with their left hand to better hear what someone is saying.

93 叫 叫 to be called
- mouth 41
- speak up! 92

It looks like someone is standing attentively, cupping their ear with their left hand to better hear what the *mouth* is saying. The person with the *mouth* (on the left) is *calling something* to the hearing-challenged friend.

[5 STROKES RANK 387]
94  

grass r

1. Short grass plants emerge vertically from the horizontal ground.
2. Here, in the United States, where these words are being written, we think of grass as a charming, but bland, garden ornament. In fact, the many species of grasses throughout the world belie this blandness. Many are highly colored and highly ornamental. Some, like some majestic forms of bamboo, are breathtaking. Consequently, it sometimes behooves us to interpret this component as a form of decoration, particularly outdoor decoration.
3. Remind yourself of the hand component of §94. That character looks like our bit of grass, but arranged vertically instead of horizontally. Sometimes it’s useful to refer to this image as another hand.

95 草 草  

grass

cǎo

1. The small ‘grass’ component on top of this character is the actual grass. To get the whole character, think of your gardener arriving to cut the grass in the morning.
2. Grass is even grassier in the morning. Glowing in the morning light, freshened by its breakfast of dew, a perfect lawn seems even more perfect at this hour.

96 苦 苦  

bitter

kǔ

It’s famine time. Bitter experience soon teaches you that grass which is ancient tastes the most bitter.

97 苗 苗  

seedling

miáo

The product of seedlings sprouting in the fenced-in field is a whole bunch of grasses. Later on, we transplant the mature plants.
98 描描 to trace

1 The 'grass' component on the right top of 描 looks sorta kinda like the left-hand 'hand' component rotated by ninety degrees and distorted somewhat. 'Hand' becomes 'grass'—a poor job of tracing the original. The 'field' component is your grade for this assignment—only 'ten' marks (out of one hundred) circled by a mouth-like enclosure.

2 Sometimes, when plants sprout, we use our hand to manipulate the seedlings and their fine, hairlike leaves. Think of plucking these tiny seedlings, turning them upside down, and holding them to trace a picture—a type of primitive Chinese calligraphy.

99 菲菲 luxuriant

BF We've previously (§13) identified the components as combs in the hair of a royal princess. She further affixes a costly gold hair clip at the top of her head. The clip, with its clasp mechanism, looks like a tuft of golden grass in her hair. How luxurious!

100 廿廿 horned animal

CMP Every so often, we'll come upon a component that appears in a handful or so of characters. We'll call this one a horned animal, something like a cow or ox. The verticals represent the horns and the sides of the head. A horizontal stroke shows the top of the head. Sometimes, as we see here, the component includes a short stroke connecting the bottom of the verticals—the base of the head.

101 革革 animal hide

1 When you skin a horned animal to get its hide, there are lots of cutouts in the leather representing places where the poor animal used to have four hooves, two eyes, one nose, one actual mouth, and two ears. These openings are like mouths in the hide, and there are ten of them.

2 We're looking down at the tanned hide of some unfortunate animal (sheep, antelope, etc.). That's the head of the horned animal at the top, followed by the mouth component, which here suggests the animal's body, and finally the strokes of the ten which sketch the spine, tail, and limbs.
鞋 鞋  shoe    动物皮 101  土,黄土 9  土,黄土 9  xié

To create shoes, the cobbler uses *leather* in which you can comfortably put both feet on the *ground*, which is why the 'soil' component occurs twice.

[15 STROKES  RANK 1638]
Unit 8
Getting Stroked

103 甘甘 sweet
BF Animals respond voraciously to intense flavors that are sweet. Here our favorite horned animal enjoys sucking on one peppermint stick.
[5 STROKES RANK 1408]

104 曲曲 bend
Some horned animal with a huge open mouth, perhaps something like a horned hippopotamus, is ready to chomp on your umbrella. For sure, the animal will bend it.
[6 STROKES RANK 1066]

105 曹曹 plaintiff and defendant
In a courtroom setting, one of either the plaintiff or defendant is bent when they speak.
[11 STROKES RANK 1570]

106 世世 generation
BF Certain animals don’t live as long as people. Metaphorically speaking, it takes ten or so animal lifespans to equal one human generation.
[5 STROKES RANK 181]

107 网 net
CMP This radical corresponds to the full character 网, wǎng, ‘net’, often used today for ‘Internet’. Interpret this glyph as a snapshot of a small portion of a net, focusing on three adjacent gaps in its fabric and the strands framing them.
108 罪 罪  crime, guilt
Becoming enmeshed in crime and covered in guilt is a lot like becoming entangled in a net that is not arranged properly—you’re all knotted up (‘knot’ sounds like ‘not’, get it?).

109 置 置  to place, put
1  Pictographically, here is a net emptying its load (of fish?) which cascades down a chute into the tall, vertical storage container. The result—we’ve placed the stuff where it belongs.
2  At the end of the day, we take our net, carefully clean it, and then straighten it up and perhaps hang it vertically on the wall. We’ve put it where it belongs, ready for tomorrow’s use.

110 皿 皿  vessel, dish
1  You can think of this drawing as one net stretched to become tense and rigid, attached to a lower boundary. In this tense mode, the strands of the net are like wires, keeping the contents from slipping out. Thus, it becomes like a vessel or dish.
2  Imagine the profile of a fancy bowl. The scribes have sketched here its footing and the lines of texture on the walls of the bowl.

111 C  place of refuge
This land form, like an arm which encircles and protects a loved one, provides a place for people with like interests, skills, or characteristics to congregate safely, or a place where people can come together for mutual assistance and help—a place of refuge.

112 司 司  company
A company is a place of refuge—so to speak—for people who have come together to work for a common goal—that of the company. And so, metaphorically, they speak with one mouth.
113 卫 卫 guard, protect  ■ place of refuge 111  ■ scepter 5  ■ one 2  wèi

1. At the place of refuge for the clans, the leader wields his scepter of authority to guard and protect his people from the danger just over the horizon.
2. This character clearly shows the profile of a fist ready to challenge and defend, to guard and protect.

114 节 节 festival  ■ grass 94  ■ guard, protect 113  ■ one 2  jié

BF The earliest festivals were times of celebration following the successful safekeeping and guarding of a tribe following attack—enemies over the horizon are a distant bad memory! (The grayed horizon tells you that this component should be removed from consideration.) Fronds of decorative grass were hung everywhere to serve as convenient and cheap decorations.

115 韦 韦 leather  ■ plentiful 12  ■ place of refuge 111  wéi

BF Note how the horizontal part of ‘place of refuge’ coincides with the bottom horizontal of ‘plentiful’.

Look at the spot we’ve scouted out. Plentiful resources and well-fortified to make a refuge. It’ll make a good place to hide from our enemies, and ‘hide’ is a synonym of ‘leather’!

116 围 围 surround, enclose  ■ enclosure 40  ■ leather 115  wéi

We hide (a synonym for leather, remember!) in an enclosure for protection against our enemies who surround us.

117 韩 韩 South Korea  ■ ten 6  ■ morning 70  ■ leather 115  hán

Those businessmen from South Korea are too canny for me! We’ve had meetings for the last ten mornings, and we still have yet to come to terms about exclusive importing of their leather chopsticks! (See those upper two horizontal strokes that are part of the ‘leather’ component? It’s a set of those chopsticks!)
118 斤 斤 catty  ▪ place of refuge 111 (altered) ▪ fourth 25 (altered) jīn
Although a full-blown character in its own right, this structure is also a very common component of other characters. Incidentally, catty is a noun, a Chinese unit of weight. It’s about one-half a kilogram, so therefore about 1.1 pounds.

By itself, this structure looks like the left half of a table. To see this, imagine butting its right edge alongside its mirror image. The table is covered by a table cloth, too. The half we see here stands upright, but it’s very unstable. If you pound on it too hard, down it goes.

When this character itself serves as component, we may assign it the meaning of ‘unstable’ or ‘unbalanced’. Other times, we interpret it in a ‘pound’ or weight-related sense. [4 STROKES RANK 1866]

119 听 听 hear, listen  ▪ mouth 41 ▪ catty 118 tīng
That guy is talking really crazy. Are we in any danger? Whenever someone mouths off in an unbalanced manner, I listen very carefully to see if emergency measures are called for. [7 STROKES RANK 285]

120 折 折 broken (stick, rope)  ▪ hand r 29 ▪ catty 118 shé
Could this be the source of the broken table of §118? Some unbalanced person’s hand has broken it. [7 STROKES RANK 1131]

121 哲 哲 wise, sagacious  ▪ broken (stick, rope) 120 ▪ mouth 41 zhé
BF On those long winter nights, tribal elders recounted ancient historical epics. From the elder’s mouth proceeds a tale of things broken during the course of great adventures. The conclusion to the tale contains wise and sagacious lessons to be learned from the story. [10 STROKES RANK 1117]

122 岳 岳 high mountain peak  ▪ catty 118 ▪ one 2 ▪ mountain 21 yuè
BF If mountains truly had one, definable, sharp peak, then something placed on a platform on top of this hypothetical peak would be unbalanced.

In other words, you’ll be unbalanced at one high mountain’s peak. [8 STROKES RANK 1844]
123 羽羽 feather, wing
**BF** The ancient scribes sketched the *two wings* of a bird with economical strokes. The wings themselves can enfold you to provide *places of refuge*. The inner ‘two’s (somewhat misaligned) suggest how the *feathers* themselves become distorted by the air flow during flight.  

124 丘丘 mound, little hill  
**BF** The vagrant is a little *unbalanced*. He looks towards the distant *horizon*, and thinks he sees a *little hill* because it’s so far away.  

125 习习 practice, study  
**BF** *Half a feather, half of a wing* suggests that we have to *practice* more in order to fully earn our *wings*!  

126 弱弱 weak, feeble, inferior  
The *wings* and *feathers* of a young fledgling look quite different from those of its parents. The chick is *weak* and *feeble*.  

127 边边 borders  
**CMP** The *borders* of a country mark a region in which a well-defined governmental *authority* provides *refuge* and safety to its citizens.  

128 再再 again  
The *king* and his court have an uncontrollable urge, an itch, to extend their reach beyond their *borders*, and to do so *again* and *again*. (The interweaving of the two components is subtle and fascinating.)
Unit 9

Wordplay and Word Play

129 同 同 same, similar  
BF People living within the same set of borders speak the same language—that is, they speak as if with one mouth (metaphorically).  
[6 STROKES RANK 69]

130 巾巾 towel  
1 BF Picture our scepter in use as a drying rod; some one’s smelly old towel is hanging limply on it to dry out—that’s what the borders represent.  
2 See how the neighboring king (symbolized here by his royal scepter) invades our borders. Could it be time for us to throw in the towel?  
By extension, since a towel is a cloth with a special purpose, we will feel free to interpret this character as a towel or other special purpose piece of fabric when it appears as a component.  
[3 STROKES RANK 2281]

131 吊 吊 hang, suspend  
1 What special cloth hangs below a man’s mouth? A necktie.  
2 A freshly-hung person must look like this, suspended from the noose, body hanging limply down below the head.  
[6 STROKES RANK 2050]

132 帽 帽 hat  
Some men need fancy clothes to bolster their self-esteem. In this case, the special cloth that makes them brave is a hat. (It’s a helmet-like structure, protecting our two eyes.)  
[12 STROKES RANK 1750]
UNIT 9, §§133–137 \hspace{1em} WORDPLAY AND WORD PLAY

133 帚 帚  broom*

BF The boar’s head bristles on the broom have been wrapped with towels and other cloths to sweep or mop some large area within the borders of four walls.

134 册 册  book, booklet

BF Hold an old book upright and look down on the top edge. The book is a collection of folded sheets, sewn together. This character is a schematic of that structure. Here are two of these gatherings, sewn together to form one booklet.

135 亅 亅  mineshaft

CMP If the component in §111 is a place of safety, this component is its opposite, a place of danger! Think of it perhaps as a mineshaft. You fall right down the shaft of this tunnel. When you regain consciousness, you can walk horizontally, at least for a short bit.

136 隼 隼  tadpole

BF Here’s a scribe’s-eye view of a tadpole. A giant mouth-head is attached to a wiggling, wriggling shaft-shaped body. A round, sun-shaped stomach provides nourishment until the cute little creature achieves a measure of self-sufficiency.

137 七 七  seven

Go ahead—turn this character over so it’s upside-down. You’ll see a Roman ‘seven’, crossed in the European fashion.
Look closely at this portion of an electric grid. The current enters or exits via the mineshaft-shaped wire, and disperses through the other wires in a regular pattern that looks like the sun.

For readers with some background in physics, a moving current gives rise to an electromagnetic field, nicely symbolized by the ‘sun’ component. The sun itself has a massive electromagnetic field associated with it.

[5 STROKES RANK 230]

The hand grabs the wire (the shape of a mineshaft suggests a segment of a live wire) in a careless manner. The sharp end pierces his hand and it bleeds a bit.

[4 STROKES RANK 1411]

The central scepter represents the court of a powerful king. His court can be a place of refuge but also a mineshaft of danger, depending on how well you play politics.

When present as a component, 也 combines contrasts together.

[3 STROKES RANK 31]

This is a more descriptive character for ‘earth’ than we saw ’way back in §9. In addition to suggesting the soil itself, we are reminded that our planet is both dangerous—watch out for mineshafts!—but also secure, a place of refuge. It is arid, but also fertile, high and also low, dry and wet, and so on and so on.

[6 STROKES RANK 21]

Ancient ladles and spoons were more substantial than their modern-day descendants. That’s because their ways of making them were imprecise. As a result, you could serve seven guests with a single gargantuan scoop. Remember that the bottom curve represents the part that holds the soup.

[2 STROKES RANK 3252]
Here’s how the ancients signalled their intentions and meanings during their meetings. The polished bottoms of ladles focused the rays of the sun on each item on a poster during a presentation.

I use the fingers of my hand to point and so make my intentions and meanings clear.

Although we see two ladles, the left being a mirror image of the right, the long parts of each are actually levees on a river channeling water from the north, the top part of the picture, and letting the water flow down to the lands of the south. The short horizontal strokes are supports keeping the levees from toppling.

Here are two ancient ladles. Compared with the first, the second is more elegant.

Annotations by hand allow authors (and future scholars) to compare their revisions with the original versions.

Finishing a task, compared with doing only ten percent of it, is better.

This guy is an elder brother because, he saw the sun first, at least compared with his younger brothers.
150 屯屯 stockpile, store up

*Electricity* flows when a stockpile of electrons—the particles that give a charge to the current—is drawn to a region with an electron deficit.

151 吨 吨 ton

There are several pretentious idiots in my class. Here’s how to identify them: they open their mouths, and the worthless trivia they’ve stockpiled over the years comes pouring out—a ton of it.

152 篮 篮 basket, box

There are two ways to enclose a mineshaft. One way is to put a lid on it, as we do here, to box it in completely. Another way...

153 匪 匪 bandit

Gangs of bandits posed a real problem in many pre-modern societies. Boxes of valuables were not safe.

154 匠 匠 craftsman

Give a true craftsman raw materials as funky and clunky as an old box and an unbalanced table, and soon you get a creative work of art.
Unit 10
In Nature’s Realm

155 chóng 囚[receptacle]

**CMP** We can stop off the **one** horizontal leg of the **mineshaft**, damming it up with a vertical fence to form some kind of **receptacle**.

156 huà 區[draw]

What better symbolizes a landscape that you’re busy **drawing** than a **field**. Discerning critics have always said your paintings are larger than life, and look how the drawing explodes out of the frame formed by ‘**one**’ plus ‘**receptacle**’. Another tour de force!

157 木[单] 卂[耳]

**CMP** The ear sticks out a bit from the side of the head, so try not to laugh.

158 印 印[seal, stamp]

The point of a **stamp** or **seal** is to make a mark that’s uniquely yours. Stick some **one’s ear** at the **back of a boar’s head** (that’s how it has been altered) and use the **single ear** as a handle. Now, simply ink the head and press it to paper for a unique and memorable mark.

159 丌 丌[美丽]

**BF** Here are two shell-like **ears** each with **one** earring to make up a **single** pair. The jewelry is exquisite and oh-so **elegant**.
160 昀 昀 head held high 亻 basket, box 152 耳 single ear 157
CMP The box and the single ear resemble a prominent pair of ears plainly visible as their owner holds his head high.

161 昀 昀 hold your head high 日, sun 63 头 held high 160 áng
When you hold your head high, you get as close as you can to the sun.
[8 STROKES  RANK 1952]

162 抑 抑 restrain, restrict 扌 hand 29 头 held high 160 yì
BF Could the hand in his face, forcing him to hold his head high, suggest some one’s trying to bully him? It sure looks like it—his movements are being restricted.
[7 STROKES  RANK 1748]

163 當 當 size range 亻 one 2 関 enclosure 40 疋 field 57
CMP Let’s read this component top down—one, enclosure, and field. The objects become increasingly two-dimensional and more structured. We imagine this juxtaposition to represent a range of sizes, from small to large (or the other way around).

164 幅 幅 width of cloth 毛 towel 130 头 size range 163 fú
This word represents the extent of sheet-like items, cloth, pictures, photos, and so on.

The towel part reminds us that we’re talking about things like cloth, with area but little depth. How much of the thing? Well, the possibilities are many—any of a whole size range. If the length stays the same, we get this range by varying the width.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1444]

165 事 事 matter, affair 头 size range 163 (altered) 芥 scepter 5 shì
Human affairs come in all sizes and shapes. In order to make sense of them, people try to group them together, as if to skewer them with a sharp stick. But these matters are notoriously prickly, and the ‘size range’ component has been altered to emphasize the presence of sharp, prickly points.
[8 STROKES  RANK 58]
166 

CMP Normally, Chinese readers associate this shape with the compressed form of the character ‘刀’, dāo, 'knife'. In my mind, this component shows the blade represented by the straight stroke in the Swiss-army-knife holder, the outer hooked vertical. Almost always, you’ll see this component on the right edge of a character.

You use a knife to perform a job, so sometimes this component represents completion of a task, work activity, or something similar.

167 

BF Here at the Surreal Publishing Company, the dry books we publish all have pages made from dry sheets cut by extremely sharp knives.

[5 STROKES RANK 1241]

168 

Vice-president, vice-chairman, and so on sound impressive, but often these job titles serve as screens to get people to perform a range of activities, often with only a dull knife as a tool.

[11 STROKES RANK 764]

169 

CMP ...this little dab of ink that appears all the time, often on or near the top of characters (for example, 主). Sometimes, it takes an elongated form, as on the top stroke of 扔 or 睡. Look closely, for it’s barely distinguishable from a true horizontal.

As a component, it’s useful to let it mean ‘a drop of something’ or ‘a little bit’ of some larger quantity.

170 

BF The act of accurate foretelling, of prediction, is an act of high magic; what we see here is a magic wand, a scepter endowed with a dab of extraordinary power.

Historically, this glyph refers to the cracks in a tortoise shell by which the ancient priests foretold the future.

[2 STROKES RANK 1979]
171 扑 扑 dedicate oneself  
1 With wand in hand, you’re ready to dedicate yourself to good works.
2 Dedication to a cause requires a tremendous amount of self-discipline, so much so that when you use your hand in this activity, you need some sorcery from a magic wand to keep you on task.  

172 占 占 practice divination  
BF When you practice divination, you rely on two main tools—your magic wand, with which you foretell the future, and your mouth, with which you woo credulous followers.

173 卓 卓 stand firm  
Sometimes, a magic wand in the morning is the only thing that gets me up and out of bed, perky enough to stand firm at that time of day.

174 罩 罩 bamboo fish trap  
Rope nets are notoriously floppy things, but if we make it out of bamboo, the strands of the net stand firm, so the resulting bamboo fish trap is very effective.

175 上 上 on  
We use the magic wand on one single surface to mark the most interesting side, which in this case is the side on top.

176 下 下 under  
We use the magic wand under one single surface to mark the side of interest—in this case, the under side.

177 吏 吏 scold, reprimand  
BF You try to reduce the instability of this table (see §118) by adding a dab of something, but no use—down it goes. The boss scolds you, yet again.
178 卧 卧 lie down, crouch (animals) subject of a ruler 17  foretell 170  wò

Animals are good at hiding. They crouch down out of sight as the loyal subjects of the king hunt fresh meat for the royal supper. The hunters have been foretold where to locate and subdue the well-concealed animals.

[8 STROKES RANK 1944]

179 卡 卡 card on 175  under 176  kǎ

The silvery, stiff stuff of a credit card with its strange imprints and designs on top and underneath is a universal part of modern life.

[5 STROKES RANK 717]

180 吓 吓frighten mouth 41  under 176  xià

Imagine a face with the mouth located under the chin. How frightening!

[6 STROKES RANK 1466]
Imagine that we are ice-skating on top of some surface. We use the scepter, anchored as it is in the skating rink, to stop ourselves.

I use my hand when I'm in a stopped position to pull myself back into motion.

An example of correct behavior is stopping right at the line.

When the sun is shining, all is right with the world. This is the essence of being.

I use my hand to make the doodad you see on the right stand firm—I try to balance it on its end. But things don't balance well on a pointy bottom. It falls down immediately.
186 牛 ox

1. This pictograph is a stylized ox or cow. The central spine is just that, the two horizontals are the legs, and the little dab of ink shows the left horn of the animal.

2. Ox or cow meat can provide some royal eating; that’s what the scepter means. We get at least two good steaks from the animal, and the drop of blood still visible is to some people’s taste.

187 制 make, manufacture

Here are the kinds of things you need to manufacture things in a pre-modern society. The cow or ox provides power. The cloth polishes and cleans the finished product, and the knife symbolizes the instruments you need for fine detailing.

188 午 noonish

BF (午 can refer to ‘noon’, but also to the period between around 11AM and 1PM—‘noonish’.)

I start to get a little bit dry at around noon—it’s been a long time since my breakfast coffee.

The two characters, 牛 and 午 in §§186 and 188, are confusing to beginners! How can you tell them apart? They are the same except that ‘cow’ has a central protuberance; could it be the second horn of the animal? ‘Noonish’ is flat up top, so people can lie comfortably on it for their afternoon siesta.

189 告 tell

BF It’s a windy day outside. As you tell a buddy some crucial news, the wind blows a little bit of earth into your mouth.

190 靠 depend upon

If I depend upon you to take the garbage out, then I do not have to tell you twice.
191 生 生 give birth to 三 4 柄 scepter 5 捺 dab 169 shēng

Giving birth creates a family of three out of what had been two. The newborn little guy is the guy on top. We know he or she is little, because the little dab tells us so. The scepter acts as a fastener to bind and bond the new family together.  

[5 STROKES RANK 34]

192 年 年 year  生 give birth to 191 (altered)  一 an unexpected stroke nián

Here’s 生, ‘to give birth’. It’s been altered—subtly—so the central stroke points down instead of up. As the years pass, we journey away from birth and towards death. The unexpected little stroke of ink suggests that the years themselves are full of unexpected strokes of luck.  

[6 STROKES RANK 45]

193 星 星 star  生 give birth to 191  日, sun 63 xīng

An ancient legend says that sparks given off by the sun serve as the seminal material by which it gave birth to stars.  

[9 STROKES RANK 537]

194 牲 牲 domestic animal  牲 ox 186 生 give birth to 191 shēng

BF What’s one surprising difference between domesticated animals and their wild counterparts? It’s easy to get animals like oxen and cows to give birth in captivity, but not so for their wild cousins.  

[9 STROKES RANK 1582]

195 竹 竹 bamboo  捺 dab (times 2) 169 四th fourth (times 2) 25 zhú

BF Young bamboo shoots are among the fastest growing plants on the planet, sometimes growing an inch or two per hour! Bamboo grows so fast that the ancient Chinese artists could not paint them convincingly in the square grid that calligraphic custom demands. So they split a young plant in two, and we see here two sections of the seedling plant next to each other, with one dab-like leaf at the top of each section.  

[6 STROKES RANK 1588]
Doors lead to safety and comfort, to cozy houses where everything ‘will be all right’. Anyone, be she among the high (symbolized by her scepter) or low (a mere dab of a person) can enter through here to a place of refuge.

The dab of ink up top at the left is the hinge around which the door—the right-angle stroke on the right—swings. When used as a component, 门 can symbolize a ‘place of gathering’ in addition to ‘gate’. People often do mill around entrances and exits.

People gather at special places to exchange information and gossip. A person at one such place of gathering opens their mouth to ask a question.

Here’s how to get into your room: retreat from the sun, go through the door, and you’re in! Or, from within your room, you can look through the door and see the sun outside.

In ancient China, the king did in fact sit at the gate during the intercalary months that were added to the lunar calendar.

At the doorway, with your ear properly placed, you can both hear and smell anything going on inside.

How poetic to think of the color white as a little bit of sun!
202 自 自 self

The eye is the gateway for all visual information into our brain. A small portion of this material influences our behavior, and becomes part of our core self.

203 百 百 hundred

We’ve been trying to sell our old house for months. Finally, we figured out if we applied one coat of whitewash, the place would look a hundred percent better.

204 拍 拍 clap

Go ahead—clap your hands especially hard. Your palms will briefly turn white as the force of the clap pushes the blood out of your tissues.

205 帕 帕 handkerchief

BF A special cloth which is white!? How much clearer can these components be! This is a handkerchief.

206 帛 帛 silk

The symbolism of white cloth is clear—such fancy duds could only be silk.

Both characters 帏 and 帏 (§§205 and 206) use the same components but place them differently. Keep them straight in our mind by remembering that silk is famous for the elegance of the way it handles—it drapes beautifully. In 希, the white substance seems to hang on a central pole, which will emphasize this elegance.
Unit 12
Coming to Terms

207 皇 皇 emperor
white 201 king 11 huáng
BF ‘White’ often suggests purity and sometimes superiority. The Chinese portray an emperor as a white king, a king-among-kings.
[9 STROKES RANK 759]

208 咱 咱 you and me
mouth 41 self 202 zán
BF (This is the ‘inclusive we’—that is, it includes the speaker.) The two components here suggest the presence of at least two people. The mouth refers to someone else, and the self component is the speaker. Altogether, this is we, as long as the speaker is included.
[9 STROKES RANK 1265]

209 血 血 blood
dab 169 vessel, dish 110 xiě
Blood was always a by-product of the animal sacrifices of ancient societies. Gathered in vessels for easy disposal, the only clue to their contents was the rich, dark drops at the rim of the container.
[6 STROKES RANK 658]

210 寸 寸 inch
hand 27 (altered) dab 169 cùn
(A ‘Chinese inch’ is one-third of a decimeter, approximately 1.3 American inches.) Hand? Where do you see a hand, or anything remotely like the image in §27? Some artistic license is in order. The fact that the ‘hook’ of §24 extends above the horizontal ‘one’ indicates that some other strokes are missing, namely the top two horizontals. The little dab of ink marks a special point on the wrist—the point where you can feel your pulse, about an inch below the heel of the hand.
We will sometimes use this component for ‘little’ or ‘small’.
[3 STROKES RANK 1904]
211 时 时  time  
As the sun journeys from sunrise to sunset, what is the appropriate dimension that’s equivalent to linear inches? The answer is time.  [7 STROKES  RANK 25]

212 封 封  m for correspondence  
A letter is something small traveling from one part of the earth to another part of the earth.  [9 STROKES  RANK 871]

213 寺 寺  Buddhist temple  
BF In the very old days, Buddhist temples were not much grander than any other house. Here’s one, made of earth, and only a small bit taller than anything else and with only a small sign out front to identify it.  [6 STROKES  RANK 1892]

214 持 持  grasp, hold  
The insurgents are almost upon you! The huge Buddhist temple ahead of you is a literal life-saver, as everybody recognizes it as a place of refuge. When you get there, you are so exhausted, you need your hand to be able to grasp the walls of the structure for support.  [9 STROKES  RANK 357]

215 特 特  special, unusual  
BF Buddhists don’t eat meat. The circumstances are special indeed when you find cow meat in a Buddhist temple.  [10 STROKES  RANK 173]

216 耐 耐  bear, endure  
The ‘dab’ in the ‘inch’ component marks the sensitive spot near the wrist where you can feel your pulse. The bristles from the ‘contrasting’ component on the left lightly brush across this spot. It’s hard to bear this ticklish sensation.  [9 STROKES  RANK 1409]
217 寻 寻 search, seek
With a specialty whisk broom in hand, all of whose bristles come from a boar’s head and are one inch long, you search high and low for your missing wallet.

218 斗 斗 cup-shaped
What do you use a cup-shaped object for? Why, to hold coffee, of course! Here you see two knuckles of somebody’s hand on the rim of the cup, right by the handle.

219 抖 抖 tremble
Wow, that cup from §218 is way too heavy for me. My hand, from the effort of holding the cup, gets weak and starts trembling.

220 主 主 master
Just as the master of the country is the king, so too the master of a house is a little bit of a king.

221 玉 玉 jade
Some essence of the king resides in his valuable possessions, make them even more valuable than if you or I owned them. Of special significance is jade, so permeated with royal essence, that owning a piece of it is like owning a bit of the king.

222 国 国 country
Here, jade symbolically represents all the king’s possessions—the entire country. 国 represents an enclosure containing everything belonging to the king, that is, the country.
223 书 书  
**book**  
place of refuge (times 2)  
dab 169  scepter 5  
shū

There are few experiences like losing yourself in the depths of a really good book. A book is the ultimate *place of refuge*, perhaps why this component appears twice. Moreover, *books* extend their grace to all and sundry, from those with riches and wealth and material trappings (the ‘scepter’) to those with *virtually nothing* to their names.  

[4 STROKES  RANK 282]

224 千 千  
thousand  
dab 169  ten 6  
qiān

Sometimes we will s-t-r-e-t-c-h our li-lle “dab” of ink:  

Think of the ‘dab’ as a snapshot of a clothes line from which are hanging many freshly-washed items of clothes, each worth an average of *ten* dollars. There’s lots of clean clothes hanging, perhaps as many as one hundred, so the whole wash is worth one *thousand* dollars in all.  

[3 STROKES  RANK 599]

Reader alert: in certain font styles, this character 千 bears a striking resemblance to 十 ‘dry’ (§10). Learn to pay attention to see whether the top stroke is truly horizontal or a near-horizontal smear.

225 舌 舌  
tongue  
thousand 224  mouth 41  
shé

**BF** A human mouth is relatively small, yet capable of great expressive power. Any one of *thousands* of different sentiments come out of your *mouth* by virtue of your tongue’s versatility.  

[6 STROKES  RANK 1958]

226 括 括  
draw together  
hand 29  tongue 225  
kuò

The definition refers to the *drawing together* or *contracting* together of things like muscles. The muscles in your *hand* and in your *tongue* are examples of body parts that *contract* quickly under sharp pain.  

[9 STROKES  RANK 850]

227 甜 甜  
sweetness  
tongue 225  sweet 103  
tián

We already considered ‘sweet’ in §103, although that character 甘 was a bound form. This is a more ‘intense’ sensation, because it can stand by itself. Anyway, we can imagine a *tongue* licking something *sweet and pleasant* because of its *sweetness*.  

[11 STROKES  RANK 2020]
228 heavy

After Thanksgiving dinner, with what feels like one thousand pounds of food inside me, I can hardly budge from the table—I feel so heavy.

[9 STROKES RANK 140]

229 director

BF Nowadays, trustees, members of Boards of Directors, and other bigwigs wear clothes suitable of their high station in life. In ancient days, they advertised their status by wearing grassy laurels on their heads and dragging around a heavy, overweight body.

[12 STROKES RANK 1629]

230 money, currency

BF A little bit of towel, perhaps a small strip, was a forerunner to what would become currency.

[4 STROKES RANK 1188]

231 hair

That’s not a mineshaft pictured here, but rather the chin of a teenage boy on the verge of shaving. Already he can see a dab-like whisk of a whisker surmounting two genuine hairs. He can’t wait to start shaving!

[4 STROKES RANK 623]

232 in disorder

Go ahead, wrap your tongue around a live wire. You’ll find your thoughts and sensations temporarily jumbled up and in great disorder.

[7 STROKES RANK 765]
233 此 此 this

This must stop! Stop banging the spoon on the sidewalk—I can’t take the noise.

234 些 些 some

When I apply the specifier ‘this’ to a couple of things, why now I have some stuff.

235 皆 皆 each and every

Scientists tell us that white light contains light rays of all other colors. In that respect, some quality that appears in each and every item can be compared with the color white.

236 托 托 hold in the palm

If you cup your hand to imitate a ladle, you’ll be able to hold liquid in your palm, too—at least for some small amount of time.
237 监 监  inspect, supervise

BF The scribes have taken lots of liberties with the components of this character. The ‘crouch’ bit (卧, §178) has suffered the most. The kneeling subject part on its left has been reduced to two parallel verticals, and the stem of the magic wand leans to the right. The drop of blood that identifies ‘blood’ has moved from the left to the right side of the vessel (血, §209).

Here’s a crouching courtier, bent over a bowl of blood, inspecting it to see that it is ritually okay.

[10 STROKES  RANK 838]

238 提 提  carry, take, lift

Carrying is the use of your hands to change the location of something that is in some initial location.

[12 STROKES  RANK 196]

239 临 临  face, overlook

BF The boss in the warehouse was overlooking everything. My girlfriend and I, who were behaving like animals just a minute ago, were behind a pile of his products, crouched down and quiet.

[9 STROKES  RANK 839]

240 蓝 蓝  blue

I’m very sad and blue. The best job I could get is one inspecting the height of Kentucky bluegrass.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1190]

241 卸 卸  unload, take sth off

What made me take this summer job as airport baggage handler! We all look forward to the noon break so we can unload the bags for a bit. We all keep a single ear cocked for the whistle announcing the time to stop work.

[9 STROKES  RANK 2479]

242 址 址  foundation, site

BF The purpose of a building’s foundation is to stop it from sliding or moving to the earth.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1848]
243 竹 竹

bamboo r

CMP Take a knife and slice off the bottom stems of these bamboo segments. This radical treatment gives rise to the bamboo radical that often appears in Chinese characters.

244 等 等

wait

bamboo r 243

Buddhist temple 213
dèng

I am not a particularly religious person. I can imagine myself attending a service in a Buddhist temple out of curiosity, but then I’d stare at the bamboo walls, waiting with impatience for the service to end.

[12 STROKES RANK 158]

245 簡 簡

simple, simplified

bamboo r 243

room 198
jiǎn

BF The elegant simplicity of the room is stunning. Everything is made from bamboo.

[13 STROKES RANK 716]

246 筆 筆

pen

bamboo r 243

hair 231
bǐ

Ancient pens were made from bamboo, which provided the part to hold, and hair, which served as nib.

[10 STROKES RANK 956]

247 宅 宅

roof

CMP This stylized roof, with the little dab up top for the pitch line, tops traditional Chinese houses.

248 定 定
decide*

roof 247

correct 183 (altered)
dìng

Because the roof was not installed correctly, we have leaks whenever it rains. We’ve decided to bite the bullet and rip off the old one, and do it all over again.

[8 STROKES RANK 77]

249 它 它

it

roof 247

ancient ladle 142
tā

It takes hard work to make a home function. Here is a roof covering all the internal tasks that must be done—the ladle, prominent in the preparation of food, symbolizes all of them. Remember these internal tasks by their acronym, it.

[5 STROKES RANK 107]
UNIT 13, §§250–255

250 **hài** harm, injure

The worst harm people do to each other is via gossip—**too much talk** under the supposed protection of someone’s roof.

251 **fù** rich, wealthy

Rich people own much more than they need. It’s common to find similar items, but in a **range of sizes**, under their roof.

252 **shěn** examine, go over

When I study for a test, I need to **go over** all the material out loud. I feel comfortable under my own roof, where I can express myself out loud with no one giving me funny looks.

253 **xuān** declare, proclaim

BF The ‘roof’ is really a decorated handle, attached to the upper of **two** horizontal rods. The rods serve to anchor a scroll, which speaks the words of the emperor’s **proclamation**.

254 **shǒu** guard, defend

The leprechauns live in tiny houses—there are their **roofs**, only one **inch** off the ground. They use their magical powers to **guard** and **defend** us.

255 **bǎo** treasure, precious jewel

People hide their **treasures** under their own roof. Scribes use the symbol for ‘jade’ to represent these valuables.

Or else, this character shows a **house** made of jade. What a **precious** treasure!
256 宫 宫 palace  
 BF The blocks of the pitch pipes also suggest rooms, many rooms. What kind of structure consists of a roof surmounting many rooms? Why, a royal palace, of course.

257 宁 宁 rather, would rather  
 BF Help! The roof is collapsing for the fourth time. I would rather that this didn’t happen. Next time, I’m making the roof supports out of wood (sounds like ‘would’).

258 街 街 street  
 BF Compared to crude earthen paths, paved streets must have seemed like roads paved with jade tablets. Of course, everyone would rather travel on these!
Here’s a roof spreading over a place that you go to, that you stay at, and you’re never happier than when in. It’s your ancestral house.

It’s proper and suitable to be home in our cozy den, with bookcases lining the wall.

A man’s home is his castle—he can do whatever he wants in it, for all time.

The bad guys in a movie might use their knife to harm the hero. They try to sever or cut some major blood vessel, but (Hollywood being Hollywood) invariably fail.

A pen is a place which provides a figurative roof over the heads of farm animals.
264 宅宅 residence, house

BF It looks like I lost some of my hair—because I’ve been living under the same roof for so long. That’s the comfort of a true residence.

[6 STROKES RANK 1858]

265 白门 safe house, security

CMP This is really just a Chinese roof (§247) modified to emphasize how the roof of a house encloses and protects its inhabitants. Therefore, rather than think of it as a ‘modified roof’, it seems better to imagine it as a symbol of the security that such a roof implies.

266 向向 to face

It’s been a hard journey, and now you’re almost home. With joy in your heart, you face your home, the source of greatest security. The ‘mouth’ symbolizes ‘you’ enveloped by the protective home.

[6 STROKES RANK 146]

267 吚响 make a sound

One way to make a sound that’s easily heard is to use your mouth while facing the direction you’re talking.

[9 STROKES RANK 503]

268 盖 cover

CMP The image and the title say it all.

269 亡亡 perish

BF Here’s a scene right out of Indiana Jones. The villain takes off the horizontal cover. After knocking you unconscious, he throws you down the mineshaft, covers it, and leaves you to perish.

[3 STROKES RANK 957]

270 言言 speech

BF Speech is two mouths gossiping. The cover is there to (try to) keep a lid on this chatter, to make sure harmful rumors don’t spread.

[7 STROKES RANK 355]
271 誓 誓 vow, pledge

BF *Speech* acts metaphorically to hold up and support a statement that could be *broken*. The support ensures that it will not be broken, that the statement is a proper *vow* or *oath*.

272 誓 誓 scold, curse

BF During the angry *speech*, your mother-in-law shows a lot of teeth—what the ‘*net*’ suggests. She is really *cursing* you out!

273 市 市 market

BF Ancient *marketplaces* generated lots of filth, dust, and soot! Surrounding householders would have had to *cover* their white linen and *towels* to protect them from this dirt.

274 闹 闹 make a noise

You live right on the main square of the town. Today is market day. There’s *lots of noise*, because the *market* is going on right outside your *door*.

275 高 高 high

The essence of *high*-ness is a tower. Here, the ‘*mouths*’ represent building blocks, bricks or stones or whatever, which are piled higher and higher. The ‘*borders*’ here are supports on the lower portion of the tower, to help buttress the bricks from the instability of supporting lots of stuff on top. The *cover* at the top, like a finial, provides a decorative flourish.

276 搞 搞 do, work, manage, etc

Here’s someone *doing work* by using their *hands* to pile things up *high*.
277 曼 曼  
spike, sharp point

BF Don’t be fooled—bamboo and other tough grasses make potent weapons. Unwary travelers have perished in traps where lengths of these grasses are used as sharp spikes.

278 罰 罰  
punish, penalize

In the altered form of ‘scold, curse’, the ‘speech’ part has been simplified to a common form we’ll encounter later.

Amid all the cursing and screaming, if someone pulls out a knife, you’re really in for a severe punishment.

279 閨 閬  
cauldron for meat or cereal

This cauldron (often found in archaeological sites) is sufficiently tall and well-balanced on its stand that the ancients could easily have stuffed large slabs of meat in there for stewing.

280 — —  
smooth cover

CMP It’s smooth because there’s no little handle on top; compare with the ‘regular’ cover in §268.

281 亭 亭  
pavilion, kiosk

We’ve seen in §275 how useful it can be to use our components as architectural building blocks. A pavilion is a decorated, ornate building used for some special purpose. The bottom components of 高 have been replaced by some fancier counterparts. That’s how we construct a pavilion.
282 营 营  

battalion

A multitude of mouths—here there’s only two, because that’s all there’s room for—symbolizes lots of men, the men of a battalion. We know this is a battalion because battalions need food—symbolized by vegetable grass—and shelter (cover).

283 带 带  

bring, band, belt

towel component—really, fancy cloth—appears twice, once (on top) with extra decoration. Together, they form an ancient ensemble, belted in the middle.

2 (bring) Use the belt as a leash to bring somebody along with you.

284 垂 垂  

spider web

Sometimes opposite concepts are helpful in remembering the meaning of a character. Here, mentally strip away the top ‘dab’ stroke and the bottom ‘one’ stroke. We’re left with an intriguing grid of horizontals and verticals, three of each. It’s easy to interpret as a bit of a stylized spider web. This portion is mounted on a horizontal base, so it looks like our web is pretty close to the ground.
Unit 15

There’s Always a Tomorrow

285 垂 垂 droop  ■ spider web 284  chuí
A freshly-woven spider web is a marvel of intricacy and tight, tense strands. Oops, a bug or twig or some other little something has blundered into the web. The spider may prepare to feast, but the struggling bug or some windblown chaff destroys the tension of the web, causing all strands to droop.

A word on the structure of the web. Both horizontals and verticals consist of strokes in the pattern short-long-short, but the horizontals are a bit longer than the verticals. Calligraphic strokes are like people—they spread out a bit more when lying down! [8 STROKES  RANK 1592]

286 睡 睡 sleep  □ eye 78  □ droop 285  shuí
When you lie down, and your eyes begin to droop, then sleep can’t be far behind. [13 STROKES  RANK 964]

287 亅 亅 walking man  □ walking man 287  ér
CMP Imagine an amateur photographer, a very clumsy amateur photographer, trying to take a candid shot of a walking man. Good shot—too bad it’s off-center. All we got were the legs, and that’s what we see here.

288 亅 亅 son  ■ walking man 287  ér
Here are the legs of a man, but the rest of him is missing—there’s no head or other limbs! It’s an undeveloped man—a son. [2 STROKES  RANK 192]
The restless prisoner wants to get out of his cell. With no respite, this walking man circuits his enclosure looking for a way out of the four walls.

Fights on television are staged from start to finish. To build up tension and excitement, they will bring on a challenger in a box, open one side, and focus on the ‘champion’ from the legs up. They claim that this guy will be a match for anyone.

The restless prisoner has earned some free time outside his cell, so part of him is outside. The clumsy photographer from §287 did a little better this time—he captured our guy from the waist down, but still wandering around the small courtyard bordered by four mighty walls. The horizontal line is his belt. His recess ends at sunset, when the sun sets in the west.

An ox facing the setting sun in the west makes a picture perfect sacrificial animal.

Two guys aimlessly walking around discussing various get-rich schemes to increase their stock of dollars.

Gardens and parks demand huge amounts of labor to keep them looking neat and attractive to tourists. Vast infusions of dollars are necessary keep the park lands inside the boundaries looking tip-top.
295 玩  have fun, amuse oneself  
king 11  dollar 293  wán  
(This is a famously tough verb to translate into English!) Anyway, with some money in your pocket, you’re all set to have a royal good time.  
[8 STROKES  RANK 1072]

296 完  finish, complete  
roof 247  dollar 293  wán  
The roof on top of a dollar is the Chinese way of reminding shoppers that when they’ve capped their spending, they’re finished. It’s time to call it a day.  
[7 STROKES  RANK 301]

297 冠  hat, cap  
smooth cover 280  dollar 293 (altered)  inch 210  guān  
BF See how the slightly distorted ‘dollar’ scoops up the ‘inch’? That refers to the little decorative ribbon that you forgot to buy originally for this cute little sailor hat. Now your head cover is complete.  
[9 STROKES  RANK 1713]

298 兄  elder brother*  
mouth 41  walking man 287  xiōng  
BF This character shows a walking man whose mouth does all the talking. Younger siblings think about their elder brothers in this way! (The very different character of §62 also means ‘elder brother’.)  
[5 STROKES  RANK 1089]

299 克  subdue  
analog 51  walking man 287  kè  
1 It’s easy to subdue an ancient walker.  
ten 6  elder brother* 298  
2 Here’s another way to parse the components. The bottom portion consists of an elder brother with a ten-shaped spike atop his head. When ten brothers get together, they can subdue anyone.  
[7 STROKES  RANK 262]

300 先  first  
dab 169  earth, soil 9  walking man 287  xiān  
Because he was first in line, a little bit of muddy dirt splashed onto his pants during the walk.  
[6 STROKES  RANK 188]
301  

Here's a *guy walking around* who has, for some reason, placed a paper bag over his head. You can see its *borders*. As a result, he can't *see*.

Alternatively, the *borders* represent the shape of his head, so as he *walks around*, he can *see* where he's going.

[4 STROKES  RANK 153]

302 

*BF* The *king* is the *king*, and he can look at whatever he wants, and he wants to *see* the thing right *now*!

[8 STROKES  RANK 70]

303 

*BF* By itself, this low-frequency character refers to the late afternoon (specifically, the time between 5PM and 7PM). As a component, it occurs often, where it means ‘alcohol’. To people from other parts of the world, what’s the *one* thing that seems to mean so much to *Western* party-goers? *Alcohol*!

[7 STROKES  RANK 3839]

304 

*BF* The parts of this character refer to things that vanish, at least temporarily. When the influence of *alcohol* disappears, and the sun chases the *stars* away, then it’s time to *wake up*!

[16 STROKES  RANK 1075]

305 

*BF* Under the influence of *alcohol*, a person is apt to *tell* things to a friend that he wouldn’t dream of mentioning while sober. How *cruel* these revelations can be. In vino veritas…

The Chinese have adopted the English word ‘cool’, meaning great, nifty, way to go!, and use this character and pronunciation for it.

[14 STROKES  RANK 1867]

306 

*BF* When the museum painting is properly *displayed*, it makes it easy to *see* what you are *inspecting*.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1886]
307苋苋amaranth

BF Amaranth is an ancient grain recently rediscovered. Its seeds, when roasted, pop like popcorn. The ancient Chinese treated it as a leafy *vegetable* which they used to stir fry. They thought it was good for one’s *vision*.

[7 STROKES RANK 4820]

308宽宽wide, broad, lenient

Amaranth kernels are tiny but extremely numerous. (And they are very nutritious. This combination of nutrition plus bounty is what makes this grain so appealing to food scientists.) Anyway, imagine someone making a carpet from the seeds of a single amaranth plant. They are so plentiful that the house, and its *roof*, would have to be both *wide* and *broad* to encompass it.

[10 STROKES RANK 1155]

309宪宪law, statute, constitution

BF The experience of the United States is salutary in the following respect: a *constitution* is the first responsibility of a country’s founders. If done properly, it is as a *roof*, protecting and nurturing the infant nation.

[9 STROKES RANK 1484]

310人人standing man

CMP The pictograph shows a highly stylized drawing of a standing man. Used as a freestanding character, it’s very common, but it also makes frequent appearance as a component.
311 人 人  man
Sometimes our man maintains its shape (for example in the simplified form of the measure word 个; see below), but most of the time 人 gets squished, like this: 亻, as we'll see.

312 个 个  non-specific measure word
1. How can we remember that this is the non-specific Chinese measure word, used whenever a noun does not call for a special measure word? We see a man distinguished by his scepter. Thus, this pictograph identifies a very particular specimen of humanity, and by extension to any definite person, and thence to any noun requiring a measure word.
2. A man with a scepter—someone 'way up there—strolls around the marketplace, taking advantage of his position to sample all kinds of stuff. There’s no pattern behind all this sampling, so we use this non-specific measure word.

313 从 从  from
Here’s two pictures of the same man. The hindmost component in the rear left shows the same man’s original position, while front picture shows him in his present location. The rear picture shows where he came from.
We sometimes use 从 for the concept of 'source', since this character shows the progress made by somebody traveling from this source to his present position.

314 众 众  multitude
The components say it all—you see here a multitude of men.
315 萼 萼 cluster
from 313 one 2 凸
BF A cluster is a group of people or other things bound together by one common characteristic.
[5 STROKES RANK 1678]

316 两 两 both, two 凹 one 2 凸 borders 127 凸 man (times 2) 311 亻
Within the borders of the local community, two men are helping to carry one long thing, a pole or plank or whatever.
[7 STROKES RANK 133]

317 肉 肉 meat 凹 borders 127 凸 man (times 2) 311 亻
This is a pictograph of a carcass cut open. Except for calligraphic flourishes intended to make it visually well-formed, scribes are careful to make this glyph bilaterally symmetric—that is, the right and left halves are the same, like in real life.

Perhaps the borders represent the borders—skin and hide—of the animal, and the group of men will be feasting on the innards, the meat.
肉 gets frequent use as a component in other graphs, but it often takes on an altered appearance in that role, namely ‘月’. Unfortunately, another common glyph—meaning ‘moon’ or ‘month’—looks exactly the same! Oh, well... When ‘meat’ takes on its ‘月’ guise, it often means ‘body part’.
[6 STROKES RANK 1009]

318 内 内 inside* 凹 meat 317 凸 man 311 (altered) 亻
In ‘meat’, we dug within a carcass to get at the substance. In this character, the surface decoration is less, so we aren’t digging quite to the same depth—just enough to get inside the body.
[4 STROKES RANK 175]

319 耸 耸 to tower 凸 man (times 2) 311 亻 ear 82
BF This pair of thugs towers over their intended victim. How can we tell? This poor guy’s ear comes up only to the feet of the villainous duo.
[10 STROKES RANK 2163]

320 巫 巫 wizard 凸 labor, work 7 凸 man (times 2) 311 亻
BF Wizardry, when done skillfully, appears to be the work of several men.
[7 STROKES RANK 2189]
321 坐 sit
Two men sit back to back on a bench, backs up against the central backrest. Because they are drawn so small, we know the two men are sitting close to the ground.

322 闪 lightning
“It was a dark and stormy night.” Suddenly, a flash of lightning reveals a crouching man framed by the open door. Friend or foe?

323 以 use, take
Look at this environmentally-ignorant prat! We see him getting ready to throw a bit of garbage down the mine. He needs to use a garbage pail instead.

324 齿 tooth
A pictographic interpretation is best for this character, which shows a molar tooth on the upper jaw. The top part represents the tooth's root, which stops the tooth from being pulled out of your mouth when you chew. The bottom 'receptacle' component is the tooth itself. While the tooth's surface may be smooth, it is not flat. This tooth has some valleys in its exterior, and they have a shape like the character for 'man'.

325 合 join; combine
1 The 'joining' and 'combining' here refer to the pooling of efforts of a group of like-minded people, say. Recall, too, that nouns in Chinese can be either singular or plural. In this instance, it's helpful to regard the 'man' component as being plural—many men with only one mouth—a poetic description of worker solidarity, a joining together, if ever there was one.

2 The former narrative notwithstanding, this glyph looks just like a cozy little house—we see the roof, eaves, and body of the house from the side—that a weekend group of handymen built by combining their skills and efforts.
326 全 全   entire
According to the most enlightened theories of monarchy, it is the ruler who serves the entire citizenry, and not vice versa. Writing ‘king’ underneath ‘man’ helps underscore this relationship.     [6 STROKES RANK 124]

327 企 企   on tiptoe
BF Picture a fat man, a really fat man (that’s why the man’s legs are so far apart) trying to walk on tippy-toes. This is a somewhat precarious stance for this man, so he quickly comes to a complete stop to try to regain his balance.     [6 STROKES RANK 450]

328 舍 舍   give up
This verb ‘to give up’ is the same sense as ‘abandon’. The most effective way for someone to abandon a claim to something is not by physical action, but by verbal means—swearing an oath in court, for example, or some other method which uses the the tongue.     [8 STROKES RANK 1344]

329 啥 啥   what? (dialect)
Here we abandon proper grammar in favor of a dialectical utterance from our mouth. People may have trouble understanding this non-standard speech. What did you say?     [11 STROKES RANK 2082]

330 大 大   big
A standing man with outstretched arms, stretched to form a long horizontal, emphasizes the concept of big.     [3 STROKES RANK 17]

331 太 太   too (much)
The ‘dab’ draws attention to the bigness of something, thereby making it a marker of excess.     [4 STROKES RANK 240]
UNIT 16, §§332–336

A FIGHTING CHANCE

332 犬 犬 dog
Look head-on into the face of your favorite dog. Here are the whiskers above the animal’s dewlaps. One eye winks at you—what a joke life is!
[4 STROKES RANK 2649]

333 天 天 heaven
Heaven is one expanse above the great, big world.
[4 STROKES RANK 78]

334 矢 矢 arrow
BF Perhaps to early scribes who observed skilled archers letting fly their arrows, the arrow paths seemed so ethereal that this symbolism—which equated heavenly dabs with arrows—might have seemed fitting. We’ll use either of those interpretations—’arrow’ or ‘slice of heaven’—depending on context.
[5 STROKES RANK 2811]

335 医 医 medical

1 In the throes of serious illness, the doctor who restores health via the application of medicine must often seem like a magician pulling a bit of heaven out of his little black bag.
2 Medical paraphernalia are metaphorically like arrows to the essence of a disease, to kill it dead, to the benefit of the patient.
[7 STROKES RANK 482]

336 吳 吳 Kingdom of Wu
The ancient Kingdom of Wu lasted for about 60 years, starting in the year 222AD. At that time, there were two other competing kingdoms. Wu’s territory was in the south of what has become modern China.

Chinese historians regard the ability to rule as a divine gift, a mandate from heaven. Here, the central mouth plays the role of a heavenly marker, showing that heaven’s mandate lies to the south—the location of Wu.
[7 STROKES RANK 1135]
Unit 17
Notions and Trifles

337  夫  夫  man (spiffy)

 BF A big man (that is, an adult) with one horizontal hairpin in his hair symbolizes an adult man, at least in the ancient China in which men wore hairpins! We’ll call him ‘spiffy’ since the presence of this hairpin suggests dressing up.

338  规  规  rules and regulations

 BF Men see harmony when their world is governed by rules and regulations.

339  头  头  head

To remember this character, imagine rotating this drawing by 45 degrees or so to the right (in a clockwise direction). Look closely at the large crossed strokes. Don’t they look like the four paws of a big forest creature? The small stroke at the lower right is the creature’s tail, and the two remaining dabs become the eyes. This part of the animal, the head, is the most prominent part of this suggestive sketch.

340  买  买  buy

Some items for no good reason grab hold of you and won’t let you go until you buy them—think designer sneakers, pet rocks, certain dolls, and so on. In this character, the horizontal ‘one’ stroke has been altered to look like a hook. It signifies how one certain item hooks your imagination, the center of which is your head, and hangs on tight until you buy it.
341 卖 卖 sell
“Buy low, sell high”—everyone knows this cliché. In this character, one ‘sell’ equals ten buy’s, so a ‘buy’ is much lower than a ‘sell’.
Also, due to the stuff on top of ‘sell’ 卖, it seems higher than ‘buy’ 买.

342 实 实 solid, substantial
BF The roof over this man’s head makes him feel that his station in life is solid and substantial.

343 奇 奇 odd
1 How odd! How strange! Some big man is teetering across the high-wire that forms the top of the ‘可’ component. Why is he doing this? Because he can!
2 Let’s face it—most people are pretty mediocre. Someone with a outsize ability and real talent sticks out like a sore thumb, a real oddity.

344 牵 牵 lead along by holding sth
With the big cover over the animal—it’s probably a saddle—the ox can be lead by anybody.

345 因 因 because
Because of his big mouth, everyone hears his side first in any fight.

346 咽 咽 throat
BF Because of having a mouth, animals need throats to get the food to the stomach.
替替 for, on behalf of  
Here are two guys, best friends for a long time. The guy on the left is making a speech on behalf of his pal on the right.

扶扶 use a hand to support  
This tall man has had a rough night of it (too much drinking, is it?)—he can hardly remain upright. A kind passerby uses his hand to support him.

莫莫 do not, not  
Big, tall grasses can obscure the sun. Do not let this happen, or the rest of the garden plants will suffer.

摸摸 touch, grope  
Groping is gross. It’s putting your hand where it’s not supposed to be.

哭哭 weep  
1 The components of this character form the features of a face assailed by grief and weeping. The two “mouths” form eyes, from which a tear is falling.

2 Two mouths signify the presence of much emotion, and nearby a dog is howling with grief. In a human, this manifests itself as weeping.

器器 vessel  
BF The four mouths symbolize the noise that these many mouths can make! In Chinese households of two thousand years ago, only valuable and well-used cooking vessels can create a similar clatter.
entreat

BF The ‘towel’ here is more of a ceremonial garment, perhaps a robe of office, draped around the shoulders of some official man, arms stretched wide, as he entreats his audience for donations.

hero

BF Here’s a similar figure to §353, except now there’s no entreaty going on. Instead, this man wears a ceremonial crown, made of grass or other decorative plant, to show the special status of this person (as was the custom in ancient Greece). Our guy is a hero!

reflect, shine

The televangelist is entreati ng his followers to be generous with their donations. The television studios are hot—lights as bright as the sun shine on him. During close-ups, you can clearly see drops of sweat in their reflection.

arrow type

BF The arrow hit the big warrior in the left leg. He’s just about to topple over. A bit of blood is flying away in the upper right of the picture.

Also: picture the arrow on its downward path. The arrow head points down to the right, and the aerodynamic feathered fins appear at the top.

model, standard

BF The boy is busy carving a model ship. It looks like hard work since he’s using a sharp arrow as the carving tool.

martial, military

BF Military prowess and skill is all about discipline and knowledge of correct procedures, as well as practice with weapons, such as our fierce arrow.
359 戈戈 halberd
A halberd is a medieval combined spear and battle-ax. It’s easy to imagine the diagonal as the main handle leading to the spear blade. The cross-strokes are the ax blades, and don’t forget the drop of blood splashing in the air!

On the other hand, it may have suggested the kind of arrow we met in §356 to which a handle has been added. From arrow to dagger in one easy step!

360 找找 seek
Imagine seeking a lost treasure, something everybody wants. Use your hand to tightly hold your sword, which you need to repel the competition.

361 我我 I
I confidently hold my sword in my hand to symbolize the end of my training, and the introduction into the world of the new me.

362 哦哦 chant softly
I chant softly through my mouth so only I can hear me.
This character presents a dilemma common to ancient tribes. Should a person celebrate the dawn by remaining home, in the comfort of their loved ones, or should they go out and fight with their sword?

BF For my retirement, I have bought some land near the coast in the state of Oregon, whose official abbreviation is Or. That’s a great area of the world.

To row well you’ve got to attack the water with a halberd-shaped oar like a soldier goes after the enemy with a knife. Also, the strokes of ‘knife’ remind us of the banks of the river.

BF No matter how prepared you are, war is as chancy as divination regardless of the state of your swords.

Affixing a halberd to a long stick makes a great lance, a powerful and vicious weapon.

In contemporary use, this represents the Fifth of the Ten Heavenly Stems.
368 成 成 bec
dome, turn into  
archaic lance 367  
fourth 25 (altered)  
chén
Remember that the ‘fourth’ component resembles a hook. With this villainous 
bhook and my lance I can become ruler of my village.  
[6 STROKES RANK 59]

369 城 城 wall, city wall  
earth, soil 9  
become, turn into 368  
chén
The ancients were able take heaps of earth and turn them into cities and towns by surrounding them with walls.  
[9 STROKES RANK 413]

370 盛 盛 to fill, ladle  
become, turn into 368  
vessel, dish 110  
chén
When you ladle some delicious and steaming soup from the main soup tureen, this divine liquid turns into a nourishing meal.  
[11 STROKES RANK 1142]

371 咸 咸 salty  
archaic lance 367  
eye 78 (altered)  
xián
The young lance corporal was careless today. While playing with the archaic lance, he carelessly pricked his eye. The blood tastes salty.

Most likely, the ‘eye’ part is altered just to make it fit easier into the available space next to the ‘scepter’ component. It also alludes to the eye’s altered appearance as a result of its wound.  
[9 STROKES RANK 2525]

No one would blame you if the three characters 咸 ‘salty’, 成 ‘become, turn into’ (§368), and 或 ‘or’ (§363) melded in your mind into one, confusing mess. (They certainly did for the current author!) ‘Or’ is such a short word so that its superstructure doesn’t require the curvy left vertical the others do. The hook attached to this vertical in ‘become’ emphasizes its danger—if we get too close to it, we become mincemeat. Remember, the part that looks almost like an upside-down ‘dawn’ (旦) in ‘salty’ is an altered eye, which is what happens when you poke yourself with an archaic lance.

372 喊 喊 cry out  
mouth 41  
salty 371  
hán
That scoundrel threw a handful of salt into my mouth. What nerve! Salt is acceptable in moderation, but so much of it makes me cry out in pain, surprise, and disgust.  
[12 STROKES RANK 1183]
UNIT 18, §§373–378  A MIGHTY FORTRESS...

373 戟 戟  tiny, fragmentary
BF Two archaic lances, in the hands of superior soldiers, demolish each other in fairly short order. They reduce each other to piles of fragments.
[5 STROKES  RANK 6653]

374 尧 尧  legendary emperor
This legendary emperor took the many fragmentary monetary systems in very ancient China which he altered and created one unified system of currency.
[6 STROKES  RANK 3264]

The ancient scribes, so I infer, were struck by the great beauty of trees. Tree components are among the most common in Chinese characters.

375 木 木  tree
The Chinese have taken some artistic license with this glyph. The great roots at the bottom are juxtaposed to several branches at the top. There’s nary a leaf or intervening segment of trunk in sight.
[4 STROKES  RANK 694]

376 林 林  forest
BF Several trees form a forest.
[8 STROKES  RANK 364]

377 森 森  full of trees
What with yet another tree added to the forest, we are simply full of trees.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1029]

378 本 本  root or stem of plant
The ‘one’ acts as a marker to mark the root which develops into the trunk of the tree.
[5 STROKES  RANK 92]
379 朱 朱  vermilion  
BF Some vandal uses a knife to scratch a small mark on the mighty tree. Sap oozes out. It’s a pretty vermilion color.  
zhū

380 珠 珠  pearl  
BF The king was precious in traditional Chinese society, and vermilion was a precious color in Chinese art. Fine pearls are precious stones which pulsate with life like a living being. If we place the living king next to vermilion, we get (or so it seemed to ancient scribes) a pair of components for ‘pearl’.  
zhū

381 未 未  have not yet  
The forest elf has not yet climbed to the top of the tree. That tentative little marker in the form of ‘one’ shows exactly where he stopped.  
wèi

382 味 味  taste, flavor  
As food critic for a major metropolitan newspaper, it behooves you to do your job properly. Before deciding on the taste of the exciting new restaurant entrée, you need to carefully place a morsel in your mouth. You have not yet swallowed because you need to chew thoroughly to make sure all the component flavors are properly combined.  
wèi

383 末 末  end, tip  
The one extra cross-stroke is wider than its mate to emphasize that the upper part of the tree—the upper end, the tip—is the focus of the design.  
mò

A few comments are in order regarding the characters 未 (§381) and 末 (§383). How do we tell them apart? They are almost identical, differing only in the relative lengths of the two horizontal strokes. The top of 未 looks like the character 土, ‘earth’ (§9); the tree is still in the soil—it has not yet been chopped down. The top of 末, on the other hand looks like 士, ‘scholar’ (§8). Naturally enough, the ancient scribes would have regarded scholarship as the ‘tip’, the ne plus ultra, of human achievement.
384 抹 抹 put on, apply, smear  
You use the tip of your hand to apply make-up to your face.  
[8 STROKES RANK 2087]

385 杜 杜 prevent  
BF Trees in the earth are useful natural barricades, preventatives for enemy attacks.  
[7 STROKES RANK 1277]

386 柜 柜 cupboard  
BF A cupboard is a huge piece of furniture made from a tree.  
[8 STROKES RANK 1994]

387 桂 桂 cinnamon  
BF Cinnamon is a spice derived from a small evergreen tree. The two ‘earth’ components together resemble an evergreen in profile, and also reminds us that a small tree keeps close to the earth.  
[10 STROKES RANK 1930]

388 果 果 fruit  
BF The field-like shape grafted to the head of the tree isn’t really a field, but is a ripe piece of fruit with odd stripes on its skin. It’s a big piece of fruit, and so we need the strong root system of the tree to supply enough nutriments for its proper growth.  
[8 STROKES RANK 165]
A tree brought forth the fruit that we so enjoy. The harvest was so bountiful, that it was hard to count it. It helps to remember that fresh cabbage is also sweet!

There was a terrible racket out back last night! We have to wait for light of dawn to go out by the tree to investigate the cause.

You check the appearance of this picturesque tree by eye.

Look at all these trees—they’re all so straight and vertical. Trees never look like that in nature. Clearly, they have been planted by some farmer.

The mouth on top of a tree looks like a child’s puppet—head, arms, leg, and a vertical handle to hold—a Chinese bobble-head! Puppets are so endearing because of their stupid and foolish appearance.
394 束 束 bundle, bunch tree 375 (altered) mouth 41 shù

Suppose our tree is an evergreen tree or something similar. It’s time to cut it down and sell it as a Christmas or holiday tree. The strokes of the ‘mouth’ suggest twine with which we tie it up to make a more convenient bundle of branches.

[7 STROKES RANK 998]

395 困 困 hard pressed enclosure 40 tree 375 kùn

BF The old farmer has an enclosure around his entire farm. As you see, there is only one tree there, so he and his family are hard pressed to survive, let alone make a living.

[7 STROKES RANK 868]

396 操 操 drill, exercise hand 29 product 44 tree 375 cāo

The hand represents the staff sergeant leading the drill. Frequently, groups of soldiers practice in formation, shown here by the ordered group of mouths, and this is done outdoors, perhaps near a tree.

[16 STROKES RANK 1173]

397 某 某 certain, some sweet 103 tree 375 mǒu

Most trees are bitter—sap, leaves, fruit, and so on. But the certain trees that have benefited mankind the most are those producing sweet, nutritious fruit.

[9 STROKES RANK 517]

398 刺 刺 thorn, splinter bundle, bunch 394 (altered) knife 166 cì

The bundle of trees has burst open. Some joker has cut the cords with his knife. The branches are sharp and wicked-looking. Watch out for the splinters!

[8 STROKES RANK 1058]

399 析 析 analyze tree 375 catty 118 xī

BF Any wooden furniture which is unbalanced is apt to crash to the ground, smashing itself into smithereens. With the little pieces all around, woodsmen can analyze the bits and see what went wrong.

[8 STROKES RANK 1073]
400 闲 闲  idle  
I'm dying to go to work today, but the tree blocks my exit through the door.
I'm forced to stay home today and sit idle in front of the TV all day! When my wife got back, I was so entranced by the TV, my wife thought I was a tree.
[7 STROKES  RANK 1529]

401 柏 柏  cypress  
In Greek mythology, the cypress tree was associated with Hades, the god of the underworld. A tree striving toward the white light of the real world is a good emblem for this tree.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1596]

402 荣 荣  honorable  
BF The components suggest a tree covered in grass or other decorative vegetation, ornamentation appropriate in honor of someone.
[9 STROKES  RANK 993]

403 柱 柱  pillar, column  
Only the straightest, tallest, firmest of trees are chosen for their architectural suitability. What you might call master trees are appropriate for use in the construction of pillars and columns.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1691]

404 模 模  model, imitation  
BF When guys make wooden models of ships or airplanes, they do not use the whole tree.
[14 STROKES  RANK 689]

405 术 术  art, skill  
BF It takes artistry to attack a big tree, carve away all the surplus wood (so to speak), and just leave a small amount of material in the shape of a beautiful statue, a stunning work of art.
[5 STROKES  RANK 328]

406 桌 桌  table  
BF If my table, made from a tree, doesn't stand firm it's useless.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1193]
407 村 村  hamlet
A hamlet stands in relation to a city as does an inch-long twig to a tree.
[7 STROKES  RANK 712]

408 椅 椅  chair
BF The tree must think it odd that its wood is used to make a chair, an artifact for supporting a type of animal (human) in a posture that is neither lying nor standing.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1663]

409 禾 禾  rice or grain
BF The dab at the top of the tree emphasizes the tiny scale of a plant. It’s grain.
[5 STROKES  RANK 3587]

410 和 和  and
Harmony at the end of the day—rice and my mouth acting in unison to fill and to still my rumbling stomach. Heaven!
[8 STROKES  RANK 19]

411 香 香  fragrant
Under the influence of the strong morning sun, the fresh-picked rice has an unmistakable fragrance.
[9 STROKES  RANK 776]

412 稿 稿  cereal grain stalk
BF Nature uses a stalk of grain to safeguard the grain for us, to keep it high off the ground, safe from predators and dirt.
[15 STROKES  RANK 1587]

413 科 科  branch of study
BF Rice grains in a cup form interesting patterns, so interesting they form a separate branch of study.
[9 STROKES  RANK 277]
租 租  

rent  rice or grain  moreover  

zū

In long-gone days, the rent was paid in the form of agricultural produce. Here we see the actual rent payments symbolized by a portion of grain, and if we interpret ‘moreover’ as a system of shelves, then we see rice or grain received as rent being stored in an appropriate bin, as a simple form of bookkeeping.
Unit 20
Looking Good

种种 m for kinds

In a funny way, here is a picture of what happens when you try to feed a young, picky child. You’ve got some cereal grain for her. In the middle of eating it, she realizes it’s the wrong type, so she shuts her mouth tight. Tough luck, mom!

程程 rule, order

BF Piles of grain, which appear all the same, have a hypnotic effect. These piles nicely convey a sense of rule and of order.

利利 advantage, benefit

It’s to the farmer’s benefit to use a knife or other sharp tool at the time of the rice harvest.

莉莉 jasmine

BF The jasmine is a flower—a type of vegetation—with many associated benefits. It is, for example, the main ingredient in certain kinds of teas.

足足 foot

This profile of someone’s foot shows toes pointing toward the right. The ‘mouth’-like portion at the top represents the cuff of a pant leg. The ‘man’-like part at the bottom is actually the lower part of the foot, the left stroke representing the ankle. The part that looks like a ‘magic wand’ is part of the tongue and shoelaces of the shoe.
420 捉 抄 to catch, capture
Quick, there goes that cute little rabbit! To catch or capture him, you need both your hands and feet.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1822]

421 走 走 to walk
Pounding the pavement is what walking’s all about—you use your feet to cover lots of ground.
[7 STROKES  RANK 207]

422 赶 赶 rush
The neurotic fellow out for a walk has a bad feeling. It's dry now, but rain clouds are darkening the sky. Best to rush home.
[10 STROKES  RANK 908]

423 赴 赴 go to, attend
Ever been to a company dinner or other shindig? Dreadful affairs. Indifferent food, boring speakers, everyone trying to suck up to the boss. To muster up the will power to attend, you need a push from your magic wand as you walk there.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1843]

424 楚 楚 clear
BF I walk through the forest by foot to the famous hidden lake. The water is so clear it's fascinating to see the reflection of the tree in the surface (clearly visible at the top of the character). From a certain angle—and this is what makes the lake so famous—it’s not possible to distinguish between reality and reflection.
[13 STROKES  RANK 859]

425 夺 夺 seize
It’s not easy to seize something small. If we take something as small as an inch, for example, and make it bigger, then we can seize it with ease.
Alternatively, imagine a big man using his legs as pincers to seize and take hold of inch-long sticks between his thighs.
[6 STROKES  RANK 1199]
426 奋奋 act vigorously
BF You really need to exert yourself, to act vigorously if you want to cultivate a big field properly.

427 失失 lose
When you lose a game, you feel (at least temporarily) that you are just a little bit of the person you were before.

428 知知 know
Knowledge is power. Metaphorically speaking, expressing something you know is like letting fly an arrow from your mouth.

429 智智 wit
BF When your friends and family feel that your expressions of knowledge sparkle like the sun, then you know you have been granted by the gods the gift of wit.

430 贝贝 cowrie
BF The cowrie, a type of shell, served as an early form of money. This character often appears as a component, and when it does, we’ll frequently ascribe a money-related meaning to it, such as ‘valuable’ or ‘wealth’.
1 Here’s a man overflowing the borders of his estate. This suggests a superfluity of possessions, an indicator of wealth.
2 Mollusk s are the animals who manufacture shells and leave them behind for enjoyment (ours) after death (theirs). One well-known mollusk is the snail, but they all have a common structure—a fleshy foot protruding from its enclosing shell, and this glyph displays a representation of this structure.

431 则则 standard, norm
BF Government muckety-mucks use a knife, symbolically, to create standards. For example, you can imagine the knife cutting a large amount of money into standardized subunits, much the way our Federal mint divides dollars into quarters, dimes, and nickels.
432 贴 貼 paste, stick to  
As a result of scrunching my valuable cowrie shell so it would fit here on the left, it developed a couple of cracks. I’m a good repairer, so people think I practiced magic when they see the shell after it’s been fixed—it looks as good as new! But really, I just pasted some special strips over the cracks.

433 贤 贤 hasten  
BF Here’s a person topped by an elaborate shell-shaped headdress made out of grass put under tension to give it form. (Wordplay alert!) She dare not hasten, or the whole thing will collapse around her.

434 喷 喷 spurt, spout, gush  
BF A small boy’s mouth has to move fast to capture the gushing water from the fountain. The ‘hasten’ component helpfully looks like the spout of an ornate fountain.

435 赞 赞 support, assist  
BF I made it a point to get to your presentation first. I was so early that this character is shown twice, to emphasize that I was able to help you set up on the platform, which looks like a giant cowrie shell. This is how I support and assist you.

436 质 质 quality  
The collector of shells assesses their quality by seeing how unbalanced they are.

437 贵 贵 expensive  
Imagine wearing a nice, expensive hat or headdress, which this character looks like. In detail, in the middle is one enormous shell—how chic!
438 贯贯 link up  
BF Hah—you just think it’s a field over a shell! Actually, the top component is the top view of another cowrie. The extra-long horizontal line shows a string passing through this shell; it links up with the second shell whose profile we see on the bottom.

[8 STROKES  RANK 1478]

439 责责 responsibility  
BF What happens when someone entrusts a master (of a house, firm, organization, whatever) with some money or other valuable thing? The master now incurs some responsibility, whether just to care for the valuable object or to do something with it.

[8 STROKES  RANK 535]

440 员员 employee  
BF Look at this character as a picture. Here’s a broad-shouldered guy who developed those shoulder muscles in the warehouse as an employee.

[7 STROKES  RANK 200]
This employee has a little extra decoration on his head, a Western-styled hat that makes him stand out. Who merits such special treatment? Why, it’s the CEO of the firm, the head merchant.

The major source of decrease in a merchant’s inventory is the petty pilfering by employees. Whenever nobody’s looking, they use their hands to help themselves to whatever they see.

Everything in this character which looks square is really round! The employee’s head is not square—it’s round. His shoulders are not square and broad, they’re round and stooped in dejection from the constant same-old, same-old of his job. And he’s trapped in the enclosure of his job, which is also round, to symbolize that he’s always running around in circles.
Stand back and look at this character as if it were a sketch. The lower portion shows a lectern, attached to which (by a short chain) is an open book, comprised of many pages.

The pages of one book and its stories are like the borders of one country crammed with many people, so many that they are only separated from each other by a small bit of space.

The above diagrams notwithstanding, this character must have looked to ancient scribes like a stick figure of a man. The simplified head is connected by a short neck to broad shoulders themselves connected to arms held down at the side. A trim waist and two legs in motion rounds off this sketch. Sometimes, therefore, it pays to interpret this component, which appears in many other characters, as being a sketch of a man. The abbreviated head invites us to complete it with an additional component and so enhance and alter the meaning.

It’s hard work doing things on the back of your head, like trimming your ponytail. Therefore, the symbol for ‘productive labor’ perched jauntily at the back of this person’s neck provides a perfect visual metaphor.

The ‘丁’ part of this character (on the left) looks like a level surface, at the same level as the top of the head of the guy on the right. This level surface is a help to carry things on the head.

Only a stupid person would pay a dollar for one leaf of a tree.
448 颤 颤 quiver, tremble

Dawn. Our playboy man is just returning home after a comprehensive night on the town and too much drinking. He would love to cover himself from the sharp night chill and from the effects of drinking—he’s trembling violently.

[19 STROKES  RANK 1900]

449 颗 颗 m for small, roundish things

Pieces of fruit are apt to be small and roundish, and so are leaves of trees (most of the time). The juxtaposition is therefore appropriate as a measure word for beads, grains, and so on.

[14 STROKES  RANK 1448]

450 卒 卒 foot soldier

Here’s a young foot soldier all dressed in military uniform—cover (that is, hat or helmet), protective goggles—and look, you can see me reflected in each of the lenses, shiny belt, and pants with the knife edge crease, making me look look like a ‘ten’.

[8 STROKES  RANK 2584]

451 醉 醉 drunk

Mix large amounts of alcohol together with one foot soldier and what’s the result—public drunkenness.

[15 STROKES  RANK 1783]

452 吞 吞 swallow, gulp down

He was very thirsty when he took that huge swallow. He opened his mouth so wide, I thought he would swallow heaven itself.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1797]

453 幕 幕 stage curtain

A stage curtain is a vast expanse of cloth, the purpose of which is to make sure your do not see the stage as the stagehands prepare for the next act.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1315]
454 墓墓 tomb
don’t, not 349 earth, soil 9 mù
A tomb—once you pass through the earth into it, you do not return.
[13 STROKES  RANK 1816]

455 奄奄 castrate, spay
big 330 electricity 138 yān
Well. When you apply electricity to the tender regions between this big man’s legs, you castrate and cauterize this poor fellow in one fell swoop.
[8 STROKES  RANK 3462]

456 掩掩 cover, hide
hand r 29 castrate, spay 455 yǎn
The poor guy we met in §455 uses his hand over the castrated region to cover himself and hide his embarrassment.
[11 STROKES  RANK 1514]

457 仑仑 order, coherence
man 311 ancient ladle 142 lún
BF Young men are notorious for their crudeness and rowdiness. Don’t even ask what they’re doing with that soup ladle! But with maturity, these men find these tendencies transformed to ones of order and coherence.
[4 STROKES  RANK 2139]

458 顷顷 in an instant
ancient ladle 142 (altered) page, leaf 444 qǐng
For some reason, you use a spoon to get rid of the yellow leaves on your lawn. But the wind catches them, and in an instant they’re somewhere back on the ground.
[8 STROKES  RANK 2724]

459 柴柴 firewood
this 233 tree 375 chái
This tree has been chopped down to a small size, perfect for firewood this winter. The vertical strokes in ‘this’ look like tongues of flame.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1981]

460 棍棍 rod, stick
tree 375 elder brother** 149 gùn
Using a piece of a tree, I tried carving a statue of my elder brother. His face is a tough one to imitate—the carving looked like a dull stick despite my best efforts—or maybe that’s what I really think of him!
[12 STROKES  RANK 2255]
461 胃胃 stomach

The stomach is a type of meat which, like a farmer’s field, contains nutritious stuff.

462 訓训 hay for fodder

BF Man subdues the wild boar by providing hay.

463 争 争 struggle

The struggle is between the man with a stick and a wild boar. It’s not looking good for the man.

464 睁睁 open (eyes)

I hate the struggle every Monday morning between me and my eyes. My brain says ‘open up’, while my heart and soul reply, ‘stay shut’.

465 欠欠 owe, lack

These two men are connected by a business relationship. The shorter fellow (on top) owes money to the other. While he owes this money, he lacks stature, at least temporarily.

466 翰翰 writing brush

BF Practicing Chinese calligraphy with a proper writing brush is demanding. The best time is ten in the morning. A man begins by picking up the brush, whose hairs are as fine as feathers.
Unit 22
A Time to Sew, a Time to Rip

467 挣挣 struggle, strive
You struggle using your hands as you strive through life.

[9 STROKES RANK 1875]

468 换换 exchange, trade
The essence of trade is doing and talking, symbolized by a hand and a man who entreats you to buy.

[10 STROKES RANK 824]

469 唤唤 call, call out to
Why bother to call out to someone? You use your mouth to make the call when you want to entreat a man to do something with you or for you.

[10 STROKES RANK 1835]

470 兼兼 double, twice
BF Imagine using the head of a huge, angry boar to keep two sheaves of grain. A double harvest?

[10 STROKES RANK 1515]

471 题题 topic, subject, title
The topic of an article is what is on the page.

[15 STROKES RANK 218]

472 万万 ten thousand
One good man is better than ten thousand of his middle-of-the-road colleagues.

[3 STROKES RANK 322]
473 笑 laugh, smile
The parts of bamboo look like eyes crinkled in laughter. The gods love laughter the best, and so laughter reaches heaven quicker than any prayer.

[10 STROKES RANK 346]

474 丙 third in series
The downward ‘borders’ component looks like a downward-pointing ‘C’, the third grade from the highest in school. This is the grade that one guy received after doing no work whatsoever.

[5 STROKES RANK 2645]

475 越 exceed
BF An ancient bully, walking about with an archaic lance could take what he wanted from the cowering peasants and so exceed his current wealth.

[12 STROKES RANK 440]

476 兔 rabbit
A pictograph of a cute rabbit: the altered ‘man’ component looks like two ever-so-cute ears atop a mouth-like head. All this surmounts powerful legs for quick hopping away from danger. Oh, and don’t forget the cute dab-like tail.

[8 STROKES RANK 2364]

477 免 dismiss, fire, exempt
We fired the rabbit. I know that because the rabbit’s tail has vanished.

[7 STROKES RANK 755]

478 挽 draw, pull
The rotten employee refused to leave the office even after being fired. I used my hand to forcibly pull him out and send him on his way.

[10 STROKES RANK 2222]

479 晚 evening
BF When you dismiss the sun, you get evening.

[11 STROKES RANK 641]
UNIT 22, §§480–485
A TIME TO SEW, A TIME TO RIP

480 策 策 policy, plan, scheme

BF The plan for the government was written on a bundle of bamboo scrolls.

[12 STROKES RANK 714]

481 负 负 bear, carry on shoulders

This man is working for money for he is now old enough to bear responsibility for his own welfare.

[6 STROKES RANK 691]

482 入 入 enter, receive, take in

BF Although this looks like a man with a jaunty something or other on his head, think instead of a fledgling plant, whose roots force themselves down to enter the earth.

[2 STROKES RANK 210]

483 背 背 bear, shoulder

The 'meat' represents a living body, shouldering an evenly divided load on its north end.

[9 STROKES RANK 787]

484 顿 顿 m for meals

I've always been a healthy eater. Many people stockpile a great deal for meals.

[10 STROKES RANK 794]

485 鱼 鱼 fish

1 Behold one fish, leaping out of the water and plunging back in. Up top, the forked tail, looking like a funny sort of man, flashes in the sunlight. The striped body, resembling the character for 'field', is already re-entering the surface of the water.

2 The American Indians who practiced agriculture increased crop fertility by planting one fish with each seed. Here’s a man, the farmer, in his field, inserting the poor fish below the surface of the soil.

[8 STROKES RANK 852]
486 鲁鲁 stupid, dull, vulgar  
BF Fish swimming in the sea are marvels of grace and elegance. Remove them from their natural environment, and in the light of day, they look dull and stupid.  
[l12 STROKES RANK 898]

487 宋宋 Song dynasty  
This character, built up from an architectural component (roof) and material (tree) reminds us that the development of architecture and structural engineering was among the most important achievements of the Song dynasty.  
[7 STROKES RANK 990]

488 骨骨 bone  
BF Those boxy, bony things atop a person’s body represent the skeleton attached to the meat.  
[9 STROKES RANK 1036]

489 歌歌 song  
“There once was a fine elder brother  
Who borrowed money from another.  
The guy soon wanted it back  
But bro’ said, “Money I lack  
But I know I can cadge from my mother.”  
How’s that for an impromptu song?  
[14 STROKES RANK 1040]

490 晓晓 dawn, daybreak  
BF According to the story, this legendary emperor will rise with the sun to save his homeland, and so will appear at dawn.  
[10 STROKES RANK 1357]

491 赖赖 rely, depend on  
I’m too old to do this job any longer. I rely on my son to carry the heavy bundles on his shoulders.  
[13 STROKES RANK 1365]
吹 吹  blow, puff

If I blow too hard into a bagpipe (or other wind instrument), I will collapse. After such an effort, I surely lack the stamina to continue. Breath passes through the mouth.
Unit 23
Cleaning the Sewers

493 渴 丧 mourning
BF Mourning is the weeping for one who has *perished*.
[8 STROKES  RANK 1404]

494 箱 箱 box, trunk, chest
BF The chest was cunningly designed to have the *appearance of bamboo*.
[15 STROKES  RANK 1453]

495 趋 趋 hasten, hurry
BF The oxen walk home towards their *fodder* until they get a whiff of this delicious substance. Then, it’s all I can do not to be dragged off my feet as they *hasten* to stuff themselves.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1486]

496 拖 拖 pull, drag, haul
This *man* uses two (sounds like ‘too’) *hands* to *pull* the rickshaw.
[8 STROKES  RANK 1492]

497 欣 欣 happy
BF My girl friend agreed to marry me. I’m giddy with *happiness*—and the giddiness *unbalances* me, as if I’m *lacking* self-control.
[8 STROKES  RANK 1523]
498 拟拟 plan, intend

The evil plan was to lure your girlfriend’s new boyfriend to the edge of the mineshaft, and give a swift shove with your hand. How’s that for melodrama?

[7 STROKES  RANK 1541]

499 贡贡 tribute, gifts

BF Part of the money we all receive as wages from our work gets exacted from us as tax, a tribute to the various governments under which we serve.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1548]

500 寄寄 send, mail, consign

First-class stamps—what you use to send letters to a friend’s house—often cost an odd number of cents.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1611]

501 耗耗 consume, cost, dawdle

The two pieces of antique wood were tied together with phony blond hair. This bundle of wood cost me a bundle, too.

[10 STROKES  RANK 1730]

502 菌菌 mushroom

BF Inside the experimental enclosure, we sprinkle raw grain amongst the grass, just to see what happens. But they don’t sprout—it’s so moist that giant mushrooms grow instead.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1733]

503 赋赋 endow, bestow

The rebel army confiscates money for their warlords, and this is the source of their monetary endowments.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1747]

504 秩秩 order*, sequence*

BF The artist’s latest masterpiece consists of an orderly sequence of grains glued to a mirror. The patterns are quite intricate; you could stare at them and lose yourself in the work.

[10 STROKES  RANK 1749]
505 捷 捷 victorious  

\[\text{jié}\]  

BF The victorious army marches in triumph, holding in their hands the heads of their enemies as if they were boar’s heads.  

[11 STROKES RANK 1789]

506 盐 盐 salt  

\[\text{yán}\]  

Workers of the world are the salt of the earth. I store some of that salt in a small dish, and set it on the table to season my meals.  

[10 STROKES RANK 1885]

507 柯 柯 ax handle  

\[\text{kē}\]  

BF The wooden part of the ax is the ax handle. With a long, inflexible handle, I can do much more work than my neighbor.  

[9 STROKES RANK 1903]

508 棉 棉 cotton  

\[\text{mián}\]  

A certain tree (well, alright, it’s a plant) provides silk-like fiber good for clothes. We call this cotton.  

[12 STROKES RANK 1967]

509 合 合 cozy house  

\[\text{hā}\]  

CMP We’ve already seen this component as a character in §325, but it’s convenient, to treat it as a special component.

510 哈 哈 aha!  

1 Here someone is sliding down the roof of our cozy house. How satisfying! You can hear this little imp saying ‘aha’, a sound of satisfaction. Out of this imp’s mouth comes ‘aha’, a sound.  

2 Imagine coming home after a stressful day at work to your nice, cozy house. How satisfying—an involuntary ‘aha’ escapes your mouth.  

[9 STROKES RANK 713]
511 拾 拾  pick up  
(The definition refers to the act of picking something up from the ground.)
After building this cozy house, it’s necessary to use your hands to pick up all the building debris from the ground.
Also, it requires manual labor to keep the house tidy, inside and out, so it remains cozy. You always have pick up after kids, spouses, in-laws, guests, dogs, and so on.  
[9 STROKES  RANK 1961]

512 答 答  answer  
Imagine joining the bamboo canes together to use as a primitive telephone system. From the inner sanctum of your cozy house, you could frame queries and receive answers.  
[12 STROKES  RANK 559]

513 搭 搭  build  
1 The hand plucks the answer from the oracle, which encourages the building of a new temple.
2 In conjunction with a hand, the bit of grass above the cozy house is really another hand, as suggested in §512, but rotated by ninety degrees. A pair of hands working on the house are clearly engaged in building.  
[12 STROKES  RANK 1842]

514 塔 塔  pagoda  
1 They’ve built the pagoda on a particularly fine lot of earth, which makes it a literal answer to our prayers.
2 It makes sense to consider the answer component to be a decorated house—the bit of grass on top provides the ornamental effect. In the ground of a building lot, we add some ornate decoration that looks made from grass or other vegetation to what started as an ordinary cozy house, and end up with a pagoda.  
[12 STROKES  RANK 1030]

515 拿 拿  take  
Here’s a hand extending towards a cozy house—someone looking for a “hand out” is ready to take whatever they can from wherever they can.  
[10 STROKES  RANK 645]
516 盒盒 small box  
BF A small box is a vessel that would be useful for storage in our cozy house.

517 命命 life, fate  
Here’s one lucky guy. His fate has given him a loving family and this great cozy house to live in. But he knows this could all turn on a dime, so he cocks his ear to the wind (metaphorically speaking) to be on the lookout for anything that could trouble his fortune.

518 夤夬 surprised man  
CMP That little vertical tweak is an unexpected mark—something the man had no idea was awaiting him. We’ll use this component for a surprised man.
While taking a walk on some unexplored soil, a surprised man trips over an unexpected clod of dirt, a lump of soil.

The bits and pieces of this component say it all.

The clay found on tops of dry mountains was used in ancient times to create today’s archaeological vessels.

Because of the dry mountainous bits to which the prisoners (a bunch of men surprised at this harsh sentence) have been exiled, there’s a serious shortage of food. Everyone is slowly starving.

Drop a stone into a pool. The splashes feel good on a hot summer day. Here’s three of those drops.
524 江 江 river, Yangtze  jiāng
A good river system helps a culture do work—transport goods, maintain communications, move people, and so on. It’s no wonder that water plus labor comprised a river for the ancient scribes. (Nowadays, you’re apt to see ‘Yangtze’ spelled according to pinyin rules as ‘Yangzi’.)

525 汗 汗 sweat  hàn
Sweat is water on our skin that, as it dries, keeps you cool.

526 汪 汪 bow-wow  wāng
In my view, large, thoroughbred dogs—Newfoundlands, St. Bernards, mastiffs, and so on—are the kings of domesticated animals. But these big guys are messy and slobbery. You get drops of liquid all over you when these kings bark.

527 油 油 oil  yóu
Fine oil, close to the consistency of water, allows you to do things (cook, keep machinery from seizing up, quiet noisy hinges, and so on) you couldn’t do without this bit of grease.

528 洁 洁 clean  jié
BF Believe it or not, water has feelings about what it’s being used for. It doesn’t care to water plants or to flush toilets, but it feels lucky if people use it for cleaning.

529 河 河 river*  hé
One characteristic of rivers: the flowing water can enable civilization (see §§524).

530 泪 泪 tears  lèi
BF Tears are water that flows from the eyes.
It looks like water flows through this complex mechanism on the right, one of our generation’s most impressive inventions. Even so, it’s so complicated that the fluid will leak out for sure.

There are some small chips of wood in the bottom of the basket, so small they fit between the basket reeds and are hard to gather. All I need do is pour water in the basket. The water floats the chips to the surface, where they clump together for easy gathering.

Water, drop by drop, works the same way on any stone surface. Eventually, it can wear a hole right through it.

An ancient commentary on the nature of life? All you need is water to keep you going and a tongue to keep you talking!

A young person, fresh out of college, is about to go out on her own. She looks out the door of her parents’ house, where life beckons to her, a wide and broad canvas ready for her mark.

Cold water in a dish. The summer sun shines on it all day. By evening, the water has warmed up.
537 浩 浩 vast, grand
BF The right, ‘tell’ component looks for all the world like a single-masted sailboat. How can you tell if the body of water your sailing on is vast enough for this vessel? If the sailboat doesn’t sink, you’re fine.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1864]

538 茫 茫 vast, without borders
BF The ocean is vast and borderless. The shipwrecked sailor, floating hopelessly on the featureless waters, feels an ever present thirst pierce him like a sharp spike.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1951]

539 注 注 pour
BF An empty cup requires you focus attention on it—its color, shape, workmanship, and so on. As soon as you pour anything into it, that focus shifts to the liquid inside. This liquid—water, tea, whatever—now dominates and becomes master of this situation.
[8 STROKES  RANK 492]

540 洗 洗 wash, bathe
Washing up and bathing are some things you do first when you get up. Of course, you use water in this process.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1247]

541 满 满 full, complete
I have two flowerpots outside. If I water them, flowers and grasses will fill them.

[Another meaning is ‘Manchu’. The 滿族—Mǎnzú—were a non-ethnic Chinese people that ruled China from the seventeenth century to the beginning of the twentieth. One class of officials in their empire were the 滿大人—mǎn dàrén—which came into English as ‘mandarin’ and lent its name in English for the modern standard Chinese language.]
542 潛 潛 hide
BF Allan Quartermain (or is it James Bond?) submerges himself beneath *four-and-one-half* (sounds like *for, on behalf of*) feet of murky river *water*. This will effectively *hide* him from Dr. No, or Goldfinger, or whoever is the villain *du jour*.

543 漠 漠 desert
BF A *desert* is a place where *water* is *not*.

544 潤 潤 moist, soft
The ancients believed that the extra months added to the lunar calendar—the so-called *intercalary months*—to keep the length of the year more-or-less constant were particularly auspicious. For farmers, this meant a promise of additional *water* to keep their crops *moist* and healthy.

These are “*soft*” months—months that aren’t always present.
Unit 25
Clean Living

545 水 水 water
The graceful lines of 水 suggest the coming together of streams of water.
[4 STROKES RANK 202]

546 益 益 benefit, advantage 益 water 545 (altered) 益 vessel, dish 110
BF Look at the water component—it appears sideways! But wait, maybe the vessel is sideways and the water is shown normal. Or maybe you, the reader, are sideways! This multiple point of view is beneficial in life, as it helps us keep an open mind.
[10 STROKES RANK 649]

547 浅 浅 shallow, superficial 浅 water 523 浅 tiny, fragmentary 373
Water in tiny amounts is the very definition of 'shallow'.
[8 STROKES RANK 1721]

548 湘 湘 Hunan province (abbrev) 湘 water 523 湘 appearance 391
The food in Hunan province is well-known for its spiciness. The tears running down your face after one of their authentic meals gives you a watery appearance.
[12 STROKES RANK 2245]

549 录 录 record, write down 录 boar's head 34 (altered) 录 water 545 (altered)
BF The ancients wasted nothing! Taking a boar's head and steeping it in water for several weeks, they created an ink that didn't fade. Moreover, they could easily remove bristles from the skin, and use these 'pens' to record tribal history.
[8 STROKES RANK 919]
550 测 测 to survey, measure  
One performs a survey to establish a standard. The most ancient surveys and measurements were of water levels (think of the ancient records of the Nile and its flooding), which explains the connection with water.

[9 STROKES RANK 861]

551 酒 酒 wine, liquor
After awhile, new wine absorbs humidity from the air, becoming more watery in the process—but it’s still wine!

[10 STROKES RANK 797]

552 池 池 pool, pond
BF What kind of body of water supports this odd contraption with the curved bottom, tall mast, and other stuff on a deck? The ‘also’ component helps us visualize a small boat on a pond.

[6 STROKES RANK 1709]

553 混 混 confuse, mix up
Look—someone has thrown all the brothers into the water. Which one is the eldest? With all of them thrashing around, hair plastered down on their heads, it’s too confusing to tell.

[11 STROKES RANK 1137]

554 隶 隶 belong to
BF The boar is very attached to his face, but (being only a boar) he can only see it by glimpsing his altered reflection in the water.

[8 STROKES RANK 1801]

555 泉 泉 spring, fountain
BF A metaphorical image of a pristine mountain spring would be that of white water.

[9 STROKES RANK 1641]
556 津津 ferry crossing 津 津
People put ferry crossings where the river is narrowest. Here’s one crossing so convenient that it takes only a giant pen floating on the calm waters to ferry people across. Of course, pens are messy, but better ‘ink’ than ‘sink’.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1353]

557 求求 request, entreat 求 求
Something, some little thing, is floating on the surface of the water. It’s my hat! It keeps drifting farther and farther away. Although it’s only one inanimate object, I can’t help entreat ing it to come back to me.

[7 STROKES  RANK 312]

558 球球 ball, sphere 球 球
The entire globe is ruled by the great king (or so he thinks). That means that any request he makes instantly gets carried out. He’s having a ball!

[11 STROKES  RANK 628]

559 范范 pattern, model, example 范 范
The most famous one-eared painter of all time is Vincent van Gogh, who sliced one off in a fit of pique. And yet, even today, his techniques continue to inspire; he is a powerful role model. His colored areas, in which bits of colored grass swirl in water backgrounds, radiate bursts of energy.

[8 STROKES  RANK 705]

560 永永 forever, always 永 永
The marooned desert traveler could live forever, if only he had a bit of water.

[5 STROKES  RANK 842]

561 渔渔 fisherman 渔 渔
A fisherman is a person who removes fish from the water.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1770]
562 污 污 dirty, filthy, foul
Use water to wash your hand of dirt. Your hand is covered in so much filth that its shape is distorted.

563 黎 黎 black, dark
Is there an advantage to storing things that have been placed in buckets of water? Probably not—the water provides a natural habitat for slime, crud, and other unmentionables, so the result is a black and dark mess.

564 滑 滑 slippery, smooth, cunning
The bone is very rough. If we dip it in water, it feels much smoother, at least until the water dries.

565 塌 塌 numerous, repeated
The repeated gurgling sound in swift streams is like the speech of water.

566 沃 沃 fertile, rich
Crops that are little grow big with the addition of water which enhances the natural fertility of the soil.

567 溃 溃 burst, break through
The raging water attacked the expensive seawall with gusto, finally breaking through with no care for the money involved.

568 剥 剥 to peel, shell, skin
In medieval times, parchment was too valuable to discard after use. Instead, scripes would peel away with a knife what had been written down to create new writing space.
569 冬 冬
ice r

CMP Drop a stone onto a block of ice. Not much happens, but if it’s a heavy rock, some chips of ice may fly away. Here you see two.

570 冲 冲
pour boiling water on 冬 冬

You can see foggy clouds of vapor above blocks of ice and steamy clouds near boiling water, which (perhaps) explains the connection between ‘ice’ and ‘boiling water’. Were you to pour a stream of boiling water it would pass through the middle of a block of ice.

[6 STROKES_RANK 702]
The man was surprised by the amount of winter ice in New York City. This is not for him—he has decided to move to a warmer climate, and he’ll be on the next plane to California.

We have a situation here. A piece of ice cut my elder brother in the head—you can see the two streams of blood running down his head.

If you add salt to ice, you reduce the slipperiness of the mixture (at least you do after the ice melts).

I don’t know about you, but on the ice I definitely lack stature. I fall several times while struggling to return to the safety and stability of solid ground.

Any time a mouse falls from the ceiling and lands in the soup, it’s time to replace the grass and straw in a thatched roof.
资 资  money, expenses  
Each time we get some money, we use it to pay off expenses.

冰 冰  ice  
Well, what is there to say—when you add ice to water you get ice.

净 净  clean, net (price)  
It's hard to keep clean in the winter. The water turns to ice, and the bitter cold makes simple washing a constant struggle.

盗 盗  steal, rob  
Each time I take a cookie from the cookie jar, I feel like I'm robbing my siblings.

女 女  standing woman  
To me, this character signifies the nurturing that women seem best at. Arms outstretched in a protective manner, full-figured body, this is the essence of womanhood.

女 女  woman  
The woman's new jade brooch is the most beautiful, most expensive gift she's ever received. She can't keep her hands off it, and treats it like her baby.
583 奸 奸 evil, treacherous
The evil scientist sent a heat ray to dry out the woman’s cosmetics and ointments. How treacherous!
[6 STROKES RANK 1992]

584 妇 妇 woman*
BF In those ancient, benighted times, the prototypical woman’s task was that of sweeping the floor with boar’s head bristles. Under this (outmoded) logic, this was a perfect symbol for woman.
[6 STROKES RANK 932]

585 如 如 be like
A woman is like an enclosure in that she is the repository of so many sterling characteristics.
[6 STROKES RANK 67]

586 姑 姑 paternal aunt
BF That ancient woman is my dad’s sister, my paternal aunt.
[8 STROKES RANK 994]

587 姓 姓 family name
As soon as a woman gives birth to her child, it receives the family name.
[8 STROKES RANK 1149]

588 妖 妖 goblin, demon
BF (Note well: the right component is not ‘heaven’ from §333. The top horizontal is a ‘dab’, not a bar.) Look at that supernatural woman! She has the power to make herself very small or super large. She must be a demon!
[7 STROKES RANK 1869]

589 姐 姐 older sister
Here, the ‘moreover’ component looks like a high stool, perfect for the woman who’s our elder sister who supervises when Ma’s not home.
[8 STROKES RANK 830]
要 要

want, wish, request

'West' (where the sun sets) is a symbol of evening. Then, the working day is over, and this woman enjoys a quiet evening catering to her own wishes.

[9 STROKES  RANK 26]

耍 耍

play (a role, tricks)

The ancients considered the upper component to resemble a beard. A beard on a woman—talk about contrasting information! Obviously, she’s playing a role.

[9 STROKES  RANK 2260]

妹 妹

younger sister

BF We often picture a younger sister as a person who has not yet grown up to be a woman.

[8 STROKES  RANK 1185]

委 委

listless, dejected

BF The load of grain on this poor woman’s back is more than she can bear. No wonder she appears listless and dejected.

[8 STROKES  RANK 457]

矮 矮

short of stature

William Tell shot an arrow at the apple on his son’s head, a duty imposed on him by the evil governor, and a task which made Tell very nervous and dejected. As every schoolboy knows, the child lived, partly because his short stature made the shot easier for his dad.

[13 STROKES  RANK 2027]

她 她

she

Human beings are human precisely because each one of us stores all our different traits in a single body, a single container, as it were. In this case we concentrate on one woman. She can be clever but also dumb, considerate but also selfish, outgoing but also shy, and so on and so on.

[6 STROKES  RANK 91]
A sketch of a woman which emphasizes her two breasts draws attention to her motherly qualities.
Unit 27

Saving Face

597 舟 舟  boat, ship

1 The two dabs represent passengers crammed into this dugout, both manning the horizontal oar between them. In the interests of calligraphy, but not of seamanship, the south end seems to be left open to the elements!

2 Mothers protect you from the evils of the world when you are little; boats protect you from the bruises and mishaps of the river.

598 姿 姿  looks, appearance

BF Each time a woman makes an appearance, she impresses the world with her grace, poise, bearing, and beauty.

599 姆 姆  mother, nursemaid

BF A woman acting like a mother is a nursemaid.

600 每 每  every

A man and his mother can do any and everything, at least according to the mother.

601 海 海  sea

Every kind of water, from every part of the globe, empties into the sea.
602 梅梅 plum flower or tree [tree 375] [every 600] méi
The plum tree is a favorite one among the Chinese. It is thought that this tree encompasses within it every kind of arboreal virtue. [11 STROKES RANK 1159]

603 嫌嫌 dislike, mind [woman 581] [double, twice 470] xián
If two people in a room dislike each other, the best way to calm things down is to send in a woman as mediator. [13 STROKES RANK 1826]

604 安安 rest content [roof 247] [woman 581] ān
The essence of resting content is a house (whose roof is all we can see here) in which the woman of the house maintains order and calmness. [6 STROKES RANK 232]

605 案案 record, file, law case [rest content 604] [tree 375] ān
BF I rest content on the top of the tallest tree around, quietly recording the day’s events in my diary. Meanwhile, some of my ex-students are filing down the base of the tree. Sooner or later I’m in for a nasty fall! [10 STROKES RANK 518]

606 按按 press, push down, according to [hand r 29] [rest content 604] ān
It’s a family gathering, and things are a little excited around now. In accordance with his standing as head of family, he uses his hand to make sure we all rest content. [9 STROKES RANK 573]

607 威威 power, might [archaic lance 367] [one 2] [woman 581] wēi
BF Think of a legendary Amazon warrior as an example of a powerful and mighty person. One woman equipped with a powerful archaic lance is a force to reckon with. [9 STROKES RANK 622]
608 舰舰 warship, naval vessel  ■ boat, ship 597  ■ see 301  jiàn
Warships are always big and imposing. The idea is to scare your opponents when they see this scary boat. Maybe they can avoid battle altogether.
[10 STROKES  RANK 851]

609 毒毒 poison  ■ plentiful 12 (altered)  ■ mother 596  dú
Ever hear of toxic mother syndrome? Too much of a mother’s attentions can poison her child’s existence.
[9 STROKES  RANK 947]

610 盘盘 dish, current market price  ■ boat, ship 597  ■ vessel, dish 110  pán
How do we get the picky child to eat? He is transfixed by the toy boat sailing in the vessel of cereal, and he eats! From now on, that’s how I’ll always envision a dish.
[11 STROKES  RANK 1049]

611 媒媒 matchmaker, go-between  ■ woman 581  ■ certain, some 397  méi
BF The matchmaker traditionally matches a young woman with a very special certain someone.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1506]

612 妾妾 broom-like thing  CMP We’ve seen broom-like things before (such as §§34 and 35), but this specially has a vertical handle to make the sweeping as ergonomic and easy as possible.

613 妻妻 wife  ■ broom-like thing 612  ■ woman 581  qī
BF This character reflects the traditional view of a wife as a woman pushing a broom. With time, these traditional views will wither.
[8 STROKES  RANK 1076]
614 凄 凄 chilly, sad  
BF Nothing is chillier (or sadder) than a sour marriage, the wife gone icy to her husband, and vice versa.  
[10 STROKES RANK 2352]

615 讠 讠 speech r  
CMP This component refers to §270. As a radical in another character, it appears in this form.

616 计 计 compute, calculate  
The act of speaking numbers to ten is a primitive form of calculation.  
[4 STROKES RANK 251]

617 订 订 draw up, agree on  
The purpose of making a speech about issues that are put forth (sounds like fourth, get it?) on the table is to come to some sort of agreement. The form of ‘fourth’ reminds me of a table-like platform.  
[4 STROKES RANK 1176]

618 语 语 language  
BF My speech is in my own native language.  
[9 STROKES RANK 493]

619 词 词 word, term  
A company speech often uses special words and terms that only other insiders understand.  
[7 STROKES RANK 959]

620 让 让 allow  
If you allow someone to do something, it’s because they made a convincing speech to you, and now the activity is on!  
[5 STROKES RANK 339]

621 诉 诉 tell, relate  
BF When we start telling stuff to our families, it often degenerates into a speech of reprimand.  
[7 STROKES RANK 595]
In those far-off days before forensic science and CSI, courtroom evidence often took the form of a speech by a reputed citizen giving their version of what was correct.
Unit 28
Dogs and Cats

623 许 xǔ  allow, permit
Authorities only allow political wannabees to stand up and make speeches at noontime.

624 讨 tǎo  discuss, study
The ‘inch’ component derives from a truncated hand. Take note of your next animated discussion. I think you’ll find that your speech is accompanied by lively hand motions as well.

625 诗 shī  poem, poetry
Think of Buddhist temples as places so special that ordinary speech is simply inadequate. Devotees express themselves using inspired poetry instead.

626 话 huà  dialect, vernacular
The kind of speech that I really wrap my tongue around is my local dialect.

627 认 rèn  recognize, know
You recognize a man by his speech.
误 误: miss (due to delay)

We were all enthralled by his speech, which seemed to proceed directly from his mouth and fly directly to heaven. ‘Kingdom of Wu’ itself uses mouth and heaven (§§41 and 333). Alas, we were so engrossed we missed the last bus home!

肆 肆: test, try

He’s trying like crazy to learn Mandarin Chinese, but every time he puts into speech the language models and pattern he’s practiced, his Chinese friends break into hysterical laughter!

诚 诚: honest, sincere

BF We all enjoy listening to people who are honest and sincere make speeches. Just by listening, we become uplifted.

谓 谓: say, be called

BF Perhaps those ancient scribes did have senses of humor. If so, we can imagine that the speech-like rumblings of a full stomach simulated talking and calling.

论 论: discuss, talk

People will lose patience with you and won’t talk to you unless your speech possesses coherence.

读 读: read aloud, attend school

I’m a salesman. The quality of my speech is important, for the money I make from selling my product is for going to college.

谋 谋: work for, seek

Some politicians, such as President Bill Clinton, instinctively know how to best work for their goals. Without conscious thought, the speech they use is certain to convince their antagonists.
635 课 课 subject, course, class

Speeches directed at students produce fruitful results—this is an optimist’s definition of a course or class. A more cynical observer regards it as a place where the stench of the lectures of hidebound professors land on student desks like masses of rotten fruit. What’s your opinion?  

[10 STROKES  RANK 1208]

636 亻 亻 wrap

1 See how the latch at the upper left of the radical has come undone? Place your stuff inside the strap and fix the latch—it’s a wrap!

2 A person is bending over something, getting it ready for transport by wrapping it up.

637 均 均 evenly divided

BF A bundle, all wrapped up, is evenly divided into two parts.

[4 STROKES  RANK 2692]

638 均 均 equal, even

BF If you place seed in the soil in evenly divided groups, then the crop grows to the same equal height, more or less.

[7 STROKES  RANK 903]

639 句 句 sentence

BF Your mouth produces words; by extension, one mouth represents a sequence of words. If you can wrap them up in grammatical and syntactical wrapping paper, you have a sentence.

[5 STROKES  RANK 707]

640 句 句 period of 10 days, years

BF ‘Sun’ is a metaphor for a period of time, often a day. One such period of time gets wrapped up in one character. The period in question can refer either to ten days or ten years.

[6 STROKES  RANK 2332]
641 询 询 inquire  
BF Listen to that pompous old fool inquire about the weather! He can’t even do so clearly and directly. Rather, he views it a chance to make an annoying speech, so boring that it seems to last ten days! [8 STROKES  RANK 1617]

642 勺 勺 spoon  
BF The ‘wrapper’ is really a distorted spoon. The latch of the wrapper is really an abbreviated handle, and the bowl-part has been emphasized in order to emphasize the spoon’s contents—only a drop of Grandma’s chicken soup is left. [3 STROKES  RANK 3275]

643 的 的 of  
‘Of’ appears in quotes, because this is a grossly simplified summary of the role that 的 plays in Chinese grammar. Perhaps the easiest way to remember this character is to squint somewhat at the components, and so observe that they form a stylized spelling of de using English letters. Anyway, this glyph occurs so often—no character is more frequent—you’ll soon learn it regardless. [8 STROKES  RANK 1]

644 丐 丐 beg  
Those who beg are sometimes quite successful at their trade. You might never know it—after all, they keep their gains securely under wraps, under their tattered clothes. [4 STROKES  RANK 2606]

645 与 与 give**  
Use one spoon to give a child their medicine. [3 STROKES  RANK 108]

646 写 写 write  
It’s pouring rain. I write you a tender note, and as I give it to you, I cover it to protect it from the downpour. [5 STROKES  RANK 448]
647 曷曷 how, why, when  

The *speech* of beggars can be wildly inventive, depending on the nature and credulity of their ‘client’. Questions involving *how, why, and when* naturally flow out of their mouths.

We’ll use this component to represent a multitude of causes or sources.

[9 STROKES  RANK 5256]

648 揭揭 tear off, take off  

The ‘*how, why, when*’ component looks like an ornate bottle, and the ‘sun’ at the top is a cork stuffed in to keep the many ingredients from evaporating. But someone’s *hand* is at this cork, ready to *tear it off*.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1666]
Unit 29

Doing Something About the Weather

**649** 喝 喝 to drink

I need a **drink**. I love to pour the liquid through my **mouth**, and I don’t care **how**, **why**, or **when** I get it.

**650** 葛葛 kudzu vine

Kudzu is the vine that devoured the American South. A voracious **grass**-like plant that grows like lightning, so quickly you can’t even begin to figure out **how**, **why**, or **when** it managed to devour your entire garden.

**651** 渴渴 thirsty

All that ice cold **water**, splishing and splashing *all over the place* drives me mad with **thirst**.

**652** 歇歇 have a rest

How am I ever going to pay all my bills? **When** will I have enough money? I **owe** so much! I need to **take a rest** before getting back to my accounts.

**653** 苟苟 thoughtless, careless

BF After they mockingly flung **grass** clippings at me, the **sentences** that escaped from my mouth made me blush later on. How **thoughtless** to let myself get carried away!
654 romantic evening
CMP Salute the appearance of the crescent moon with the advent of a romantic evening.

655 evening, dusk
Romantic evening 654 (altered) xī
[3 STROKES RANK 2003]

656 many, much
evening, dusk (times 2) 655 duō
This character is especially useful. It suggests many as in the phrase ‘many moons’, ‘many nights’. But it also suggests the passage of time, much time, evening upon evening.
[6 STROKES RANK 61]

657 evil, vicious
What does one need the cover of dusk for? Can’t be good—must be something evil and vicious.
[4 STROKES RANK 2905]

658 propagate
Winter is a necessary evil, killing plants but sparing their seeds. The seeds drop to the ground, and next spring sprout straight and tall, thereby propagating the species.
[12 STROKES RANK 1438]

659 arrange, line up
The evil mugger used his knife to force the group of rock stars to line up for easy pickings.
[6 STROKES RANK 500]

660 annihilate
If you magnify evil thoughts by a thousand, you have the power to annihilate your enemies.
[7 STROKES RANK 1815]
661 名 名 personal name  晚上, 黄昏  嘴  明
BF In the evening, it’s hard to see who’s there. You use your mouth to identify yourself, which is the purpose of a personal name.  [6 STROKES RANK 203]

662 岁 岁 years old  山  晚上  岁
BF A young, strong person is mighty as a mountain. Gradually, they wind down until, in the evening of their life they are a shadow of their former selves. How do we measure this unfortunate transformation? Using their years of age.  [6 STROKES RANK 772]

663 罗 罗 catch birds with a net  网  晚上  罗
BF What’s the best way to catch birds? It’s hard no matter how, but you increase the odds by using a net and waiting till evening when they rest, so they can’t see you.  [8 STROKES RANK 392]

664 外 外 outside, external  晚上  外
BF The day is pretty much done by evening time. To learn what’s outside this time frame, we need a magic wand to foretell the future (or, we could just wait till tomorrow!).  [5 STROKES RANK 131]

665 够 够 be enough  句  许多  够
Many sentences are enough to get any point across.  [11 STROKES RANK 538]

666 残 残 incomplete, deficient  再  坏, 恶劣  碎
BF When great evil is fragmented by the forces of good, the villain’s plans become deficient.  [9 STROKES RANK 1150]

667 死 死 die, pass away  再  坏 (altered)  古老的勺子  死
BF A great evil has befallen our leader, who has fallen down. That’s him, upside-down, looking like a bent spoon. As a result, he died.  [6 STROKES RANK 317]
668 梦

**dream**

Wandering in the *forest* at *evening* is scary. Things that look normal at noon take on an odd aspect when the light disappears. It’s a nightmare *dreamscape.*

[11 STROKES RANK 865]

669 移

**change, alter**

*rice or grain* 409  *many, much* 656

The great thing about *rice* and other *grains* is that there are *many* ways to *change* or *alter* them into good stuff to eat—flour, bread, cake, wraps, and so on.

[11 STROKES RANK 880]

670 殊

**different, special**

*evil, vicious* 657  *vermilion* 379

BF The serial killer was nasty. His *evil* acts were always as *vermilion* bloody as possible, so everyone would know how *different* and *special* he was.

[10 STROKES RANK 1191]

671 厂

**cliff r**

CMP The cutaway section of a **cliff** looks just like this.

672 厂

**factory**

Imagine working in a nineteenth century **factory**—long hours, demeaning work, and negligible pay. Desperate workers climbed to the roof, and flung themselves off this man-made **cliff**.

[2 STROKES RANK 963]

673 厅

**public rooms, hall**

*cliff r 671  fourth 25*

BF Here’s a recurring dream sequence. I envision a high **cliff** into which are carved many rooms. Each room I enter is bigger and more magnificent than the one before it. Finally, the *fourth* one I enter is a vast **reception hall**, similar in size to the Rotunda in the U.S. Capitol building.

[4 STROKES RANK 1217]

674 压

**press down**

*cliff r 671  earth, soil 9  dab 169*

Down from the top of the **cliff** comes a huge load of *earth* landing with a thud on the *little* guy who happened to be in the wrong place at the wrong time. The fallen earth **presses down down** on him, forever.

[6 STROKES RANK 756]
675 厌 厌  loathe, detest

**BF** Towards the end of his life, the rich old man grew to **detest** the entire world. He shuddered himself in a fortress-like mansion atop a **cliff**, and vicious **dogs** guarded the premises.

[6 STROKES  RANK 1633]

676 原 原  original, unprocessed

**BF** Another image: an untouched mountain **spring**, gracefully jetting off some **cliff**, powerfully suggests something primeval, untouched, and **original** to nature.

[10 STROKES  RANK 193]

677 源 源  source of river, fountainhead

**BF** The **source** of a river is the part of the **waters** that is **original**.

[13 STROKES  RANK 670]

678 厉 厉  harsh, severe, serious

**BF** As an example to the troops, the deserter was given a **harsh** and **severe** punishment. From the height of the **cliff**, in plain view of all other troops, he was given **ten thousand** lashes.

[5 STROKES  RANK 1339]

679 山 山  high cliff

**CMP** The **mountain** on top of the **cliff** emphasizes that it is a **high cliff**.

This component is actually an extremely rare character, pronounced ‘nàn’.
680 岸 岸 shore, coast

High cliffs occur most often at the shore. The dry part next to the water is the shore.

681 广 广 shelter r

Cliffs are so large and threatening. Here’s a little one—quite cozy, really. Hollow out a little cave and crawl right in for instant shelter.

682 扩 扩 enlarge

Why would you have a worker’s hands toiling on our house? Most likely, it’s to enlarge it.

683 庙 庙 temple

A temple provides a special kind of shelter. Even though there are strict codes of conduct, being there is such an uplifting and enlightening experience, that it feels like you can do whatever you want.

684 店 店 shop

Originally, a shop was a special shelter for shamans and such to practice divination. Bit by bit, the fortuneteller or proprietor would supplement their income by furnishing tangible items people needed, until finally this purpose overshadowed the original one.

685 庆 庆 celebrate

Why this sudden need for a big house? We need the space for a lot of people. Everyone’s coming to celebrate!

The sole difference between 厌 ‘loathe’ (§675) and this character 庆 ‘celebrate’ is the placement of the little ‘dab’ dot. In ‘celebrate’, the dot is nearer heaven, because celebration is a heavenly thing to do.
686 广 686 extensive
The good thing about proper shelter is that it makes you feel protected against the elements. The mangiest, crumbliest cave feels like like an extensive castle to a person in need.

687 庄 687 village
BF It’s not the houses that make a village a village, but how close to or spread out from each other they are. When houses are spread out extensively over the earth, we say we have a village.

688 座 688 seat
An extensive bunch of people sitting in the same place—well, that must be a seat.

689 庚 689 age
Under the ‘extensive’ part, ‘big’ and ‘man’ are superimposed. A small vertical stroke ties them together.

The man has finally reached sufficient maturity (=‘big’ in Chinese) to go forth and perform extensive achievements. This is a fine symbol for one’s chronological age.

690 唐 690 Tang dynasty
The great Tang dynasty was a high point of Chinese civilization. The hallmark of this great age was the verbal arts, particularly poetry.

691 廉 691 honest and upright
BF This contractor is one of the most honest workmen I’ve ever met. The house he built for us is super-strong because he doubly reinforced all the supports.
康 康  healthy, peaceful, abundant

BF Under the enlightened rule of the Tang dynasty, throughout the land and even across the water, there was abundant peace and health.

床 床  bed

People lay the mattress of their bed on a wooden frame inside their shelter.

麻 麻  hemp, pocked, pitted

In a drying shed we dry raw fibers, a forest of them. The end product is flax and hemp we can spin into clothes.

摩 摩  rub

BF Put that hempen glove on your hand and please rub my back! How soothing—and it scratches my back nicely, too.

嘛 嘛  particle of persuasion

As is often true, ‘mouth’ indicates a particle. The shy teen with the pocked skin problem needs more than a particle of persuasion to come along to the party.

病 病  sick

CMP A sick person resting at home is in extremis, coughing, sneezing, vomiting, and what not.
698 癌癌 cancer
The beloved mother has become sick. The three mouths symbolize how closely her family huddles together for support. But they have a mountain of trouble to contend with, and are going to need a mountain of medical products before they’re through, for the news is not good—it’s cancer.

699 症症 disease
BF Someone gets sick. With the correct diagnosis, we can identify the disease and prescribe proper treatment.

700 疾疾 disease*
BF Perhaps for the ancient scribes, disease seemed to them to be like a dart or arrow which appeared from nowhere to strike you sick when you least expected it.
Unit 31
Four Legs Good, Two Legs Better

701 病 病 disease, fall sick  □ sick 697  □ third in series 474  bìng
This is the third time this man has gotten sick in two weeks. Some chronic disease has gotten hold of him.

702 尸 尸 dead body  □ enclosure 40 (altered)
CMP The enclosure-like bit at the top is the body, lying cold and dead on the bed. How can you tell it’s dead? See the hand hanging down, extended at an unnatural angle.

703 尸 尸 corpse  □ dead body 702 (altered)  shī

704 尺 尺 ruler  □ corpse 703 □ measurement  chǐ
A popular notion in the old days—perhaps even now—is that a natural harmony exists between the dimensions of a human body. Here, we see a measurement made on a cooperative corpse in an effort to perform an analysis with a giant measuring device, a ruler.

705 局 局 bureau, office  □ ruler 704 (altered) □ mouth 41  jú
A government office is a place where far too many rules issue from the mouths of bureaucrats.

706 届 届 a year’s graduates  □ corpse 703 □ let sb do sth 48 jìè
At university, I worked so hard I thought I would become a corpse. Finally, they let me graduate.
707 居 居  reside
The ancient corpse commands the respect of even the Communist officials, who will let it reside in its grave even though the prime location is needed for a party big-shot.

708 据 据  occupy, seize
BF The hand represents the enemy occupier, come to your residence to seize the premises for themselves.

709 剧 剧  play, drama
The set resembles the interior of a charming nineteenth century residence. A hooded figure silently enters from stage right, a wicked knife gleaming in the footlights. The drama begins, and the audience will be on the edge of their seats throughout!

710 屈 屈  bend*
The corpse is being carried through the narrow exit to the hearse. (See how scrunched up the ‘exit’ appears in this character.) The person in life was quite fat, so it can’t fit through the exit without bending.

711 刷 刷  brush, scrub
Corpse cleaning is a delicate art. The most important tools are towels, to scrub the corpse, and a knife to scrape off evidence of violence.

712 卢 卢  gourd
BF With their eccentric, colorful, and entrancing appearance, gourds must have suggested themselves as aids to religious ceremonies. When dried and preserved, they represent the corpses of vegetables and can be used to foretell the future.
713 尿尿 urine  
With respect to medical matters, urine is a crucial bodily fluid. So much so, that if not eliminated pronto, the patient becomes a corpse in short order.

714 民民 people, masses  
The masses usually find themselves serving one ruler.

715 眠眠 sleep, dormancy  
The eyes of the people never sleep!

716 尾尾 tail  
The roadkill was the corpse of a fine raccoon. The body was left intact, but the wheels somehow stripped off all the fur, leaving hair only on its tail.

717 尼尼 nun  
Imagine that in ancient times, nuns prepared the dead for burial. Using spoon-like tools, they made the corpses appear as lifelike as possible as a service to the bereaved.

718 呢呢 particle with many uses  
Nuns take vows of poverty, so the only thing they can own is a small and very special particle with many uses, sort of a multi-purpose tool. The ‘mouth’ reminds us that particles originally served a purely verbal function.

719 尽尽 utmost, to the greatest extent  
The two marks beyond the end of the ruler emphasize our interest in things located at the greatest extent.
泥 mud, clay
Because it was black, you couldn’t tell the nun’s habit was plastered with dirt. When she fell in the water, it formed a muddy paste.

尸 corpse with mark
CMP Corpses aren’t always Hollywood clean and pretty. This one has an unexpected mark.

声 sound, voice
Imagine a crazed scholar jumping down on a corpse, leaving a mark, and forcing a bizarre sound to issue forth from the corpse’s mouth.

眉 eyebrow
BF This corpse has been marked above the eye, to mark the location of the eyebrow.

户 door of house
CMP This component displays the left pane of a swinging door. The bit at the top is the bolt in the hinge.

户 door*
Perhaps in some surreal Luis Bunuel-ian drama, someone uses a rigid corpse, fastened on the floor and at the top, as the left-hand panel of a swinging door.

护 protect
BF The door protects the family against the thumping and knocking from the hand of the crazed burglar.
Unit 32
Let Your Fingers Do the Walking

727 启 启 open up door* 725 mouth 41 qǐ
 BF Doors and mouths have one thing in common—they both open up.
 [7 STROKES  RANK 1320]

728 扇 扇 fan, leaf door* 725 feather, wing 123 shàn
 BF It’s hot in China! As you enter through the door, the feathers of an old-fashioned hand-held fan provide some cooling relief.
 [10 STROKES  RANK 1993]

729 扁 扁 flat, crushed door of house 724 book, booklet 134 biǎn
 The stupid contractor did such a poor job that one of the doors fell down on an old and valuable book, and crushed it to death!
 [9 STROKES  RANK 1737]

730 篇 篇 piece of writing bamboo r 243 flat, crushed 729 piān
 Although ‘raw’ bamboo appears naturally as rod-like giant stems, modern technology knows how to work it into flat forms, suitable for making floors and writing surfaces.
 [15 STROKES  RANK 1008]

731 戶 戶 door (alternate form) corpse 703 one 2 CMP
 This alternate form displays the left panel of a swinging door. The one line at the top reminds us that a swinging door occupies many positions.
732 后 后  behind  
BF Here the mouth represents a guy on audition in Hollywood. Oops—he didn’t get the part. Don’t let the door bang you on the behind on your way out.

733 盾 盾  shield  
A door painted with picture of the king himself makes a good shield.

734 所 所  place  
His place is a real catastrophe. Worst is the door, furiously unbalanced and liable to bang you on the head at any minute.

735 山 山  hills  
CMP When you see this on the left of a character (as in阡 and防 and many more), it represents a range of small hills. To see the hills, just imagine rotating this radical to the left (clockwise) to see the soft pair of hills.

736 阳 阳  sun  
The sun peeks over the hills at break of day.

737 队 队  team  
The team is lined up for inspection. Oops, I forgot my glasses, so when I look at the men on the team, their features are indistinct, and their heads look like a row of hills.

738 阻 阻  hinder, block  
BF Back in §15, we likened 且 to a sturdy pair of bookshelves. Imagine these shelves magnified to a large scale, and arranged in a long row. These shelves, together with the dense hills will surely block the invaders from entering our town!
739 阿 阿 particle before names 沙 hills 735  can; may 60
Chinese speakers use this particle to indicate familiarity (阿宝，‘A Bao’) or to indicate some kind of relationship, often familial (阿大 ‘ā dà’, the eldest; 阿哥 ‘ā gē’ elder brother).

When I return home after a trip, the sight of the distant hills near my home can fill me with a welcome sense of familiarity. [7 STROKES  RANK 471]

740 啊 啊 phrase suffix 沙 mouth 41  particle before names 739 a
Chinese scribes often use the mouth radical to draw interjections and particles, perhaps to suggest an exhalation of breath on an occasion that’s slightly out of the ordinary. 阿 has many alternate pronunciations. All of them, including the main one treated here, refer to interjections. [10 STROKES  RANK 753]

741 陆 陆 land, continent 沙 hills 735  earth, soil 9  mountain 21
BF How might we characterize a continent? By the presence of hills, mountains, and land. [7 STROKES  RANK 675]

742 院 院 courtyard 沙 hills 735  finish, complete 296
BF From the comfort and beauty of my Chinese courtyard, I sit contemplating the scenic hills, visible in the distance, until the period of meditation is completed. [9 STROKES  RANK 338]

743 陶 陶 pottery 沙 hills 735  wrap 636  archaeological vessel 521
BF Out in the hills beyond town, the archaeologists dug deeply to find some old wrapped pots which appear to be some of the most ancient example of pottery known. [10 STROKES  RANK 1601]

744 隔 隔 separate, impede 沙 hills 735  cauldron for meat or cereal 279
The hill tribesman threatened to impede our progress by tossing us into their huge stew pots. We ran for our lives! [12 STROKES  RANK 1319]
When the component that’s identical to ‘hills’ of §735 appears on the right of a character, as in邦 and那 and many others, it represents the skyline of a town.

How to distinguish this component from §735? Imagine ‘reading’ a character from left to right, from distant to near to you, as if the glyph represented a land- or townscape. The hills are in the distance, while the town is right up close.

Prosperous nations are formed from confederations of towns whose thriving economies—their goods are plentiful—bids fair for the future.

Prosperous nations are formed from confederations of towns whose thriving economies—their goods are plentiful—bids fair for the future.

You’ll never believe how I lost track of time right before my dinner party the other day! The doorbell rang as I was getting out of the shower, wrapped in nothing but a towel. What a state I was in. Boy, did I need help that night!

The central post office is in mid-town. I’ll stop in quickly to buy some stamps (which look like the left component), which will allow me to send out some important mail.

Things in the town are so noisy, I did not hear your question. What did you say?

This gentle profile shows someone’s big, fat nose! Don’t stick your nose in my business—it’s private!

We’ll frequently use this component to represent a snobbish person or busybody, or sometimes just a nose.
751 云 云 cloud
Here are two snobs, each trying to outdo the other in keeping their nose in the clouds.

752 坛 坛 altar
Here’s how altars are supposed to work: You pile raw animal parts on the earth, get them burning vigorously, and the denser the resulting clouds of smoke, the more appreciative will be the deity.
Unit 33
Here and There

753 会 会 meet, assemble

In my experience, meetings are huge wastes of time. Clouds of people mill about, accomplishing nothing! Most of their talk takes the form of clouds of obfuscation.

754 去 去 go

One good example of “going” is death—departure from this earth. For then you will end up in a private place within the earth.

755 至 至 to, until

Someone’s nose on the ground—nothing further happens until this guy picks himself up and brushes himself off.

Beginners could be forgiven for confusing the characters 去 (§754) and 至 (§755). Both combine the ‘private’ and ‘earth’ components, but in different orders. Both are so common that you can’t help but get them right, at least in the long run. But what of the short run? As a memory aid, focus on the bottom. For 至, soil is something we till—sounds like ‘until’. For 去, remember that ‘private’ looks like someone’s nose, and keep in mind the stupid rhyme ‘the nose goes’.

756 到 到 arrive

I need to arrive at the office for a crucial job interview, and I’m really nervous. Until I get there, my emotions are on a knife edge.
I’m not really home, safe in my room, until I am under my own roof.

The net that these practical jokers threw over my head as I was going to class, made me stop dead in my tracks.

You use your hand to shove around all the jigsaw puzzle pieces, but you stop when they’re all arranged nicely.

Actually, this is one of those small words that often occurs with other small words to connote some adverbial meaning.

We lose stuff when little bits of pieces somehow go astray.

A great advance in the history of mankind is the development of methods of using water. Using water to go places, such as over water wheels, was a landmark in technology.

The bottom ‘fourth’ component resembles a clenched fist which has rammed into some guy’s nose with such force that the scribes write it upside-down. The attacker gave his victim some serious health concerns.
open country

When I’m out in open country, I have to go back inside right away. All that wildlife gives me hay fever!

relax

As a student of Eastern meditation, I know I achieve relaxation if I give up worldly cares and give in to the harmony of the universe.

Think of a county as a government entity which stores its own records, privately, in long series of ‘moreover’-like bookshelves.

Why, look at the speaker there on the platform. He’s positioned so that you really can only see his nose and mouth.

I lift the luggage onto the train platform with my hands.

Think back to the many student demonstrations in the late ’60s–early ’70s. The authorities often managed to control them by standing on a raised platform and shooting streams of water at the students from hoses.

The leftmost component often receives the interpretation of ‘meat’. Nine o’clock, Monday morning, and a sad case to present to these med students. This flesh on the teaching stage was someone’s baby a short time ago.
771 允 允  permit, allow
BF You will have to allow me my own interpretation of this character: I see a nose with the characteristic fold of the upper lip underneath it which reminds us, in the talkativeness of this person which leads to excessive motion of the upper lip, as a walking man.
[4 STROKES  RANK 1443]

772 充 充  fill, full
BF If we cover the huge pile of permit applications, we realize that there are far too many to fill.
[6 STROKES  RANK 690]

773 勾 勾  cross out
Somebody wrapped that snob’s nose. It looks like he’s been rubbed out.
[4 STROKES  RANK 2034]

774 沟 沟  trench, groove
Imagine some catastrophic flooding somewhere. In an effort to cancel or cross out these waters, the authorities have dug a series of trenches.
[7 STROKES  RANK 1610]

775 年 年  youngest
BF Two aunties stick their pointy noses in close to see the adorable new baby—the youngest addition to the family!
[3 STROKES  RANK 4505]

776 玄 玄  incredible
BF The family across the street behaves like they’re in a Victorian melodrama. Something is incredibly wrong with their youngest, so they try to cover up his existence.
[5 STROKES  RANK 1717]

777 畜 畜  livestock
BF The farmer’s field is an incredible mess—filthy, smelly, and ugly. But that’s what you get when you keep your livestock there.
[10 STROKES  RANK 2030]
store, save up

Winter is coming. If I don’t store hay and grass now, the livestock will starve to death during those cold months.
Unit 34
Animate and Inanimate

779 现在, at present  
incredible (times 2)  這裡’s no time like the present—or, to put it another way, nothing is as incredible as now.

780 现在, at present  
水 r 523  now, at present  
incredible (times 2)  三 dots of the water component plus the two dots of the double ‘incredible’ suggest—at least visually—that there’s lots of water around. At home, that might mean that water is spurting from a burst pipe, and it’s happening now! In the fields, the abundant water helps ensure that the crops will sprout.

781 瓜melon  
水 r 523  三 dots of the water component plus the two dots of the double ‘incredible’  
瓜melon  
spurt  
private 750  water r 523  三 dots of the water component plus the two dots of the double ‘incredible’  
曲 curvy stripe  
瓜melon  
melon  
西瓜  
The three dots of the water component plus the two dots of the double ‘incredible’ suggest—at least visually—that there’s lots of water around. At home, that might mean that water is spurting from a burst pipe, and it’s happening now! In the fields, the abundant water helps ensure that the crops will sprout.  

782 开始 begin, start  
女人 581  woman 581  平平台, stage 767  女开始, start  
开始, start  
This famous female chef is getting ready for a demonstration of her art. It takes forever to get her equipment up on the stage, so that—finally—she can begin.

783 周屋, room  
死 corpse 703  周屋, room  
in until 755  纸屋, room  
The kindly old man died unexpectedly in his room. The landlord let the corpse lie there until the funeral even though he was anxious to re-rent it.
784 握握 hold, grasp, shake hands  
So shaken was I by his death that I had to use my hand to hold onto the walls of the room to keep from falling down.  
[12 STROKES RANK 1032]

785 承承 bear, hold, undertake  
BF I undertake a private commission for the government. The valuable shipments must be privately transported by hand. The easiest way to accomplish this is via river, canal, or other body of water.  
[8 STROKES RANK 639]

786 预预 in advance  
BF If you give a little something to the page, you can get into the reception in advance of everyone else. What a coup!  
[10 STROKES RANK 647]

787 层层 layer, story, floor  
The elevator in my building is out of order! By the time I walked up to my apartment on the top story, I felt like a corpse, even though my head was in the clouds that I could easily see from my windows.  
[7 STROKES RANK 699]

788 构构 construct, form  
BF For the neighborhood church, we were able to construct a cross out of wood (ouch!).  
[8 STROKES RANK 511]

789 序序 order, sequence  
BF The homeless people all line up at the shelter. We will give them food in the order in which they came.  
[7 STROKES RANK 836]

790 私私 selfish, personal, private  
BF What! The Communist leaders are keeping all the grain harvest for their personal and private use. How unjust—and how selfish!  
[7 STROKES RANK 1023]
UNIT 34, §§791–796  ANIMATE AND INANIMATE

791 购 购 buy, purchase  cowrie 430  cross out 773  俄乌
I have my shopping list in one hand, and my money in the other. Each time I buy something on the list, I cross out the item.  [8 STROKES  RANK 1078]

792 矣 矣 marks completed action  private 750  arrow 334  予以
This character represents a Chinese particle, dating from classical times, which marks the completion of an action. Grammatically, it functions similar to modern 了, ‘le’.
Imagine the ‘private’ component as a concrete barrier, against which the flying arrow collides and stops. Its action is completed.  [7 STROKES  RANK 2069]

793 埃 埃 dirt, dust  earth, soil 9  marks completed action 792  阿
BF At life’s end, the completion of my activity on this earth, my body turns into dust.  [10 STROKES  RANK 1121]

794 幻 幻 fantasy  youngest 775  place of refuge 111  仙
BF My youngest child was always prone to odd, fantastic/dreams. He always woke up screaming, and needed his mother’s comforting arms to soothe him back to sleep.  [4 STROKES  RANK 1417]

795 幽 幽 remote, secluded  mountain 21  youngest (times 2) 775  阴
BF The two ‘youngest’ components look like a brush disguising the mountain pass and keeping everything remote and secluded.  [9 STROKES  RANK 1636]

796 灏 灏 fire  CMP
These are several of the little blue flames on a gas burner.
Fire uses up resources and things—by burning them to a crisp—so we will sometimes use this meaning.
797 点点 dot practice divination 172 fire 796 diǎn
The fortune teller failed to *foretell* the fire that would break out during the night, and the family’s vast possessions were reduced to dots.
[9 STROKES  RANK 128]

798 然然 correct, so meat 317 (altered) dog 332 fire 796 rán
BF Some ancient scribe must have been a gourmand with peculiar tastes. His favorite dish, meat of dog, must be roasted on a fire for it to be correctly done.
[12 STROKES  RANK 55]

799 烈烈 strong, intense arrange, line up 659 fire 796 liè
BF To start a fire in the fireplace or barbecue, carefully arrange the charcoal bricks. The better you do this, the more intense will be the fire!
[10 STROKES  RANK 802]

800 庶庶 numerous shelter 681 horned animal 100 fire 796 shù
BF Picture a brutal blizzardy night, out west in cattle country. These cows are normally ornery, but on such a vicious evening, they’re happy to take advantage of the shelter the barn provides. They warm themselves by a large fire. You know the weather’s bad because these cold cattle are so numerous.
[11 STROKES  RANK 3016]

801 席席 mat numerous 800 (altered) towel 130 xí
BF A mat is a cloth on the ground where numerous people gather to sit and relax.
[10 STROKES  RANK 894]
UNIT 34, §§802–804 ANIMATE AND INANIMATE

802 燕 燕 swallow bird
horned animal 100 north 145 (altered) mouth 41 fire r 796 yàn
BF Here’s a parent swallow returning to feed her fledglings. Look, there they are, the four hungry dots each with a burning appetite. That’s not an animal up top, but rather their distinctive tail. Compared with other birds, their wings appear short and stubby, but the bird’s natural habitat is way up north, so it’s no wonder its wings resemble the ‘north’ component. We use an open mouth to represent the bird’s compact body. [16 STROKES RANK 1705]

803 黑 黑 black staring through window earth, soil 9 fire r 796 hēi
The war is over. Staring through the window at the devastation is wrenching. Fire has ripped into the earth, and blackened it. [12 STROKES RANK 519]

804 默 默 silent, keep silent black 803 dog 332 mò
BF The black dog was silent all night long, proving that the burglar must have been a member of the household, known to the dog. [16 STROKES RANK 1031]
Unit 35
Stop and Go

805 墨 墨 ink, ink stick  
Scribes use a black, earth-like substance to make ink.

806 杰 杰 outstanding person, hero  
BF A tree surviving a raging conflagration? It must be truly outstanding, and, by analogy, refers to an outstanding person.

807 纟 纟 silk r  
CMP Somehow, these are silk threads twisted together. Chinese weavers are skilled artisans, and sometimes we wish to emphasize the structure of their work. We would then use a complicated form of this radical, 纟.

808 乡 乡 township  
A certain level of industrialization is necessary to transform the raw silk cocoons into the kind of thread that can be woven into clothes. The alteration in the silk radical symbolizes the alteration that applies to the cocoon. Typically, you need to be in a town to find artisans with the proper skills to do this.

809 丝 丝 silk*  
See how the two silk threads are joined at the bottom strokes to yield superior strength to the resulting silk fabric.
810 红 red
The Chinese people love a certain bright orange red color. If a silk garment is to be properly seductive, to do its work, it must be that color.

[6 STROKES RANK 502]

811 纽 button
BF In the very old days, a piece of poorly-woven silk—silk that was too hideous for any other use—was pressed and knotted together to make a button.

[7 STROKES RANK 1767]

812 组 section, group
The spoiled rich kids fling their silk shirts on the bookcase. Moreover, they let the maid pick up this group of shirts and bring it to the laundry.

[8 STROKES RANK 358]

813 结 tie, knit, knot, weave
High-quality Chinese gift stores display and sell some of the most intriguing and entrancing decorative knots I have ever seen. Made of silk, they symbolize good luck.

[9 STROKES RANK 236]

814 细 thin, slender
Think here of the newly sprouted wheat in a farmer’s field. At first, these shoots resemble silk threads, they are so fine and slender.

[8 STROKES RANK 597]

815 纠 correct, rectify
BF Fancy officials, all dressed up in their silk gowns, can intimidate ordinary citizens. One honest soul has discovered an error in the proclamation, and speaks up in an effort to rectify the situation.

[5 STROKES RANK 1723]
816 绳 绳 rope
Silk threads by themselves are pretty weak. But make a paste of tadpole bodies, smear it on the silk, and—presto—you have a strong rope.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1983]

817 纵 纵 vertical
BF You test the quality of silk thread by holding it taut so it extends from top to bottom—vertically.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1236]

818 纳 纳 accept, receive
BF In the ancient world, odd pieces of silk served as receipts for important items. That is, the writing inside the scrap of silk showed that the owner had received the item in question in good condition.

[7 STROKES  RANK 684]

819 给 给 give
The sight of my freshly pressed silken dressing gown waiting for me in my cozy house always gives me a tiny frisson of pleasure no matter how often this happens.

[9 STROKES  RANK 180]

820 约 约 ask, invite
Your host is wearing his best silk suit, and uses a spoon as a symbolic ‘welcome’ to his home. How could you ask for a better invitation than this?

[6 STROKES  RANK 424]

821 药 药 medicine
Especially in olden times, medicine was created out of grasses and other herbal components. These potions were invitations to get better.

[9 STROKES  RANK 662]

822 绕 绕 wind, coil
News flash: they’ve just discovered the mummified body of the legendary emperor Yao. It was preserved by means of masses of silk thread, which were coiled around the royal corpse.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1485]
823 绘 绘  draw, paint  silk r 807  meet, assemble 753  hui
BF There’s a bunch of strange guys who meet to practice strange artistic techniques. They use silk threads to paint pictures, which have a strangely rich appearance.

824 统 统  gather, unite  silk r 807  fill, full 772  tōng
BF The embroidery project is going to take all of my attention. All the silk threads completely fill my hand as I gather them together to begin the project.

825 绿 绿  green  silk r 807  record, write down 549  lǜ
The ministers recorded the proclamation in gold letters on silk brocade. Alas, the gold was false, and the characters soon turned green.

826 经 经  warp (fabric)  silk r 807  man 311 (altered)  labor, work 7  jīng
The warp are those threads in the making of cloth that form parallel tracks in the cloth. Perpendicular to them run threads going over and under them to create the fabric.

Thus, the warp of the silk cloth provides channels up and down around which an active man (see the cartoonish horizontal stroke on his head which indicates action or movement) scurries doing all kinds of work.

827 纯 纯  pure, unmixed  silk r 807  electricity 138 (altered)  chún
Silk can conduct electricity (believe it or not) as long as the wire is pure silk.
828 素 素 plain, simple, quiet  □ plentiful 12 (altered)  □ silk r 807  sù
BF There’s something ironic in a character meaning ‘plain’ being so visually complex! But perhaps that’s the point…
Lots of elegant dresses use silk in an understated way (and ‘silk’ is indeed on the underside of the character) to create plain but elegant clothes.

[10 STROKES  RANK 661]

829 系 系 academic department  □ dab 169  □ silk r 807  xì
Life in academic college departments is funny. The politics is convoluted and brutal, a bit like complex silken embroidery but of far less value.

[7 STROKES  RANK 216]

830 线 线 thread, string, wire  □ silk r 807  □ tiny, fragmentary 373  xiàn
When you take silk and shred it into fragmentary bits, you get silk thread.

[8 STROKES  RANK 430]
The silkworms in the cellar (sounds like 'seller') are thriving. They multiply and replenish themselves, escape from their tanks, and crawl up the walls and into our bedrooms. It’s awful!

Pay attention to the piece of silk at the center of this glyph. It’s surrounded by all kinds of marks representing frayed threads. The silk hasn’t been hemmed, and gradually, at a slow rate, the threads unravel.

BF I search the entire market for the best silk, comparing quality and price, so I can exact the best deals.

The best way to deal with a bunch of silk threads is to weave them into a flat piece of fabric.

In the old days, it was tough to impart a rich purple color to cloth. This color was special, and used only for special garments, such as those made from silk.
836 累累 pile up, accumulate
BF Use threads of silk to tie together the products of our fields as they accumulate in a good year.

837 绩绩 merit, accomplishment
BF The student merits the silk robes of an accomplished scholar by virtue of her responsibility and diligence.

838 衣 衣 clothing
CMP A favorite gown has been hung in the closet (waiting its turn for the next regal occasion), and it’s a little crushed as a result, as you can see.

839 衣 衣 clothing
BF Imagine a favorite gown hung on a hanger, just after it’s come back from the cleaners. The lines suggest the lines of this fine garment. Look sharp to see the stylish collar (the dab shows the position of the head) surmount the flowing sleeves and the drape of the body of the gown.

840 袖 袖 sleeve
BF Imagine that clothes originally took the form of table cloth-like garments draped over a person’s head. It was hard to maneuver in them until some fashion genius created sleeves which allowed people to do whatever they wanted.

841 表 表 external, surface
BF When hair appears on an article of clothing (say a fur coat), it appears on the external surface.

842 展展 expand, develop
An ugly traffic accident. We spread some clothes over the corpse out of respect for both the victim and the other people at the accident site.
BF Scholars speculate that agriculture was the first accomplishment of civilization. By altering the fruits and vegetables that early farmers cultivated, it became possible to create warm and durable clothing.

BF That’s how you get fields dense with crops—practice agriculture and use plenty of water.

BF I’m a guy, and so don’t have a clue how to patch clothes. As far as I’m concerned, somebody takes a magic wand and waves it over the tear to make it go away.

BF There’s no time to waste, so I use my halberd to make clothes, and I throw the scraps on the ground. That’s how real men cut cloth!

BF The volunteers have lined up the used clothing in neat piles, and are ready to divide it up among the worthy poor.

BF Look how gaudy this guy’s clothes are—so much so that the sun seems to shine out of it. As men’s clothes get more outrageous, so does civilization decline.
849 哀 哀 sorrow, lament
BF At times of mourning or other great sorrow, you wear special types of clothing and, with your mouth, you lament.
[9 STROKES RANK 1751]

850 袁 袁 Yuan Shikai
Yuan Shikai (袁世凱), first President of the Republic of China (1912–15), declared himself Emperor in 1916. The normal glyph for ‘imperial robes’ 袛 shows traditional intricacy, especially on the top. Lines are clean and spare in the twentieth century, as you see here. Think of Yun Shikai’s imperial aspirations, the cleaner lines of the robes being grounded in edicts issuing from his mouth to justify the renewal of royalty.
[10 STROKES RANK 1755]

851 己己 self*
BF This character looks like a backwards ‘s’, which stands for ‘self’.
Also: like life itself, the line segments of 己 constantly change direction.
A life history of oneself in miniature.
[3 STROKES RANK 162]

852 己己 self*
BF
[3 STROKES RANK 162]

853 巳 巳 already
BF Compared to the previous panel, we see here that the topmost of the open spaces are about to close up. The course of life has already been charted.
[3 STROKES RANK 117]

854 岂岂 how could it be?
BF He has a mountain of troubles weighing him down. His whole self is enmeshed in these difficulties. How can it be that he will ever get out of this mess?
[6 STROKES RANK 1726]
855 记  记  remember
   Speaking to ourself over and over helps to remember stuff—shopping lists, speeches, material for tests, and so on.
   [5 STROKES  RANK 306]

856 纪  纪  historical record
   BF On a piece of silk brocade, an artisan has woven an intricate pattern signifying the historical records of many people—many selves and their historical accomplishments.
   [6 STROKES  RANK 584]
Unit 37

Time Waits for No Man

857 包 包  wrap, envelope

Wrapping yourself tightly in a warm winter cloak, say, emphasizes the concepts of wrapping and enveloping.  

858 泡 泡  blister, bubble

A blister is a bit of water wrapped up in your skin.

859 弓 弓  bow (weapon)

Many weapons of war, especially in ancient times, required teamwork to use—think of cannon, catapults, and so on. One weapon that could be worked by a soldier himself was the bow.

860 起 起  rise

Imagine taking a walk on a steamy summer day after a drenching rain. The 'self' component looks like a wisp of vapor, a cloud of steam rising from the pavement from the heat of the day.

861 配 配  join together

"Now we join together this couple in the bonds of holy matrimony." In celebration, let’s raise the glass of wine to toast the happy couple, who are now committed to treating the other as they would themselves.
危危 danger, imperil

BF A deranged man near the edge of a cliff imperils himself.

[6 STROKES RANK 826]

脆脆 fragile, brittle

Because it is fragile and brittle, the boat endangers all our lives.

[10 STROKES RANK 1976]

宛宛 bent

BF Evening, at home. The person himself is in bed, in a slumped and relaxed position while sleeping. That’s why the body is bent.

[8 STROKES RANK 2528]

仓仓 barn, storehouse

BF That’s not a man—it’s the broad roof of a barn to store food and stuff for yourself and your family.

[4 STROKES RANK 1882]

苍苍 dark green

BF This character takes its meaning from the color of the wilted grass in a well-stocked barn that peaks out of the windows. From a distance, it appears dark green.

[7 STROKES RANK 1728]

舱舱 shipboard cabin or hold

BF The part of a boat dedicated to storing stuff is the cabin.

[10 STROKES RANK 1846]

抢抢 pillage, loot

After the riot, the barn doors gaped open. The mob could not contain itself. The villagers used their hands to pillage and loot whatever they could.

[7 STROKES RANK 1412]
869 创 创 initiate, inaugurate

To celebrate the inauguration of the new barn, the town mayor has been invited to step forward and cut the ribbon with a knife.

[6 STROKES RANK 635]

870 枪 枪 rifle, gun

A long barn makes a perfect rifle range. Stand at one end with your rifle and shoot at the tree at the other end.

[8 STROKES RANK 874]

871 导 导 guide, lead

BF A road only an inch wide is already in place. It will be an effective conduit or guide because generations of hobbits have maintained it properly.

[6 STROKES RANK 343]

872 引 引 lead, guide

The king with his royal scepter together with his chief Bowman lead the people to victory.

[4 STROKES RANK 479]

873 厄 厄 trapped in difficult situation

Here I am, near the edge of a high cliff, trapped as a maniac tries to push me off.

[4 STROKES RANK 2407]

874 顾 顾 attend to, look after

I was trapped in a difficult situation but I tripped over the pages of an open book, regained my balance, and was able to attend to the situation and fix it.

[10 STROKES RANK 815]

875 袍 袍 robe, gown

BF A robe is an article of clothing that wraps you from head to toe.

[10 STROKES RANK 2324]
UNIT 37, §§876–881

TIME WAITS FOR NO MAN

876 抱
hold or carry in arms

When you hold or hug that special someone, you enfold them with your hands.

[8 STROKES RANK 1122]

877 马
horse

This is such a lovely character, especially in its traditional form

which clearly shows the head, mane, back, legs, and tail tucked back underneath the body.

878 马
horse

[3 STROKES RANK 276]

879 玛
agate

Agates are gemstones characterized by a flowing, banded appearance. The bands can be splendid looking, almost kingly in some specimens. In others, the flowing shapes of the bands reminded the scribes (perhaps) of the flowing images of the mane of a horse in full gallop.

[7 STROKES RANK 1248]

880 骂
curse, abuse

Watch two merchants. All you can see of them here are their two mouths as they review the detail of a recent sale of a horse. The left guy purchased a horse, but the right one delivered a mule. Listen as they curse and abuse each other.

[9 STROKES RANK 1449]

881 吗
yes or no?

Getting your kids to answer questions with a simple ‘yes’ or ‘no’ is thankless. I scream from my mouth until I’m hoarse (sounds like ‘horse’).

[6 STROKES RANK 453]
驻 驻  halt, stay  马  master  zhù

You know when someone’s *mastered* the art of riding a *horse* when they’re able to command it to *halt*, and it obeys.

[8 STROKES  RANK 1288]
883 骑 骑 ride or sit astride
Sitting astride a horse is an odd way to pass the time. After a while, it strains your muscles.

884 冯 冯 ford a stream
BF Winter. The river is frozen solid, but we must cross it. General Washington needs to receive our message to plan the campaign. Using my trusty horse to carry me, we break through the ice, ford the stream, and deliver the crucial message.

885 鸟 鸟 bird
Here’s another beautiful character, which, to a beginner’s eyes, superficially resembles ‘horse’ (§878). In the traditional form, you can make out the components of a peacock-like fowl

鳥
which shows the fancy feathered head, the claws below, and the long tail feathers.

886 鸟 鸟 crow
BF We see a crow as an eyeless bird. The absence of eyes emphasizes the jet-black-ness of the creature, no contrast anywhere.

887 鸣 鸣 bird or animal cry
A bird call is produced through the mouths of birds.
888 岛 岛 island

The typical island at the time when people first designed these characters was formed by an undersea mountain sticking up and inhabited by nothing but birds.

[7 STROKES RANK 798]

889 鴻 鴻 wild swan

One of the grandest of river birds is the wild swan.

[11 STROKES RANK 1924]

890 虫 虫 insect

The central apparatus of this component shows a scepter-like pin through a mouth-shaped cork, a tool often employed by naturalists to skewer their worm-like specimens. The hapless insect finds himself pinned to the board.

[6 STROKES RANK 1287]

891 虽 虽 although, even though

Even though I only opened my mouth to speak, and that only a little, somehow an insect flew in.

[9 STROKES RANK 504]

892 强 强 strong, powerful

Although the chieftain carried the huge bow into the peace talks, we knew he didn’t need it. As it was, he was stronger than any other man there.

[12 STROKES RANK 292]

893 妈 妈 mom

A true mother is a woman who would protect her child against herds of stampeding horses.

[6 STROKES RANK 750]
894 骗骗
deece, swindle

The city slicker bought the *horse* without examining it close up. It turned out to be an inflatable doll, looking good from a great distance. But in a few hours, and from close up, when all the air leaked out, the so-called animal was *flat*. The city slicker had been *swindled*.

895 融融
melt, thaw

The freezing soldiers stuffed ice into the *cauldron* for *melting* to get some drinking water. They found the water loaded with *insects* they couldn’t see when the ice was still frozen.

896 蛋蛋
egg

Birds aren’t the only creatures who lay *eggs*. While on safari a few years back, some nasty *insect* used my *foot* as a nesting territory, and presented me with a wicked parasitic disease.

897 蛇蛇
snake, serpent

To many people, a *snake* is the essence of creepy-crawliness. For many people, *it* engenders primeval disgust as do many *insects*.

898 犬
dog r

This component pictures the family *dog* curled up in front of the fireplace, and viewed from above. The main curve represents Fido’s body in repose, his tail tucked up against him. The front pair of legs is attached to his ears, and the stroke representing his hind legs completes the sketch.

899 狱狱
prison, jail

Here’s man, someone capable of *speech*, surrounded by two *dogs*, both big and fierce. In the old days, this was what served as a *prison*.
900 独 独  alone, only  

The pathetic-looking homeless person smells like a dog and is covered with insects. Phew! No wonder he or she is all alone.  

[dú]  

901 犯 犯  violate, offend, commit crime  

That dog ripped my ear off! I am violated and offended.  

[fàn]  

902 狂 狂  mad, crazy, conceited  

Dogs can be mad. People who are mad often think they are the king. That’s what dog, king, and madness have in common.  

[kuáng]  

903 狗 狗  dog*  

A dog is one of the few animals that is dog-gone smart enough to learn the meanings of simple sentences.  

[gǒu]  

904 貌 貌  appearance, aspect  

The component on the left—a dog gone wild—is by itself a very rare character denoting ‘wild beast’ (or sometimes ‘legless worm’!). Since it’s so rare, we’ll just remember it as a dog with an emphasis on the teeth. Anyway, my older brother turned white as a sheet in its presence—his appearance changed dramatically.  

[mào]  

905 猫 猫  cat  

Believe it or not, the Chinese view the cat as a dog-like animal. In former days, the cat was not housebound, but wandered freely throughout the seeded fields, looking for mice, moles, and other farm pests.  

[māo]  

The heart is apparently an especially important organ to the Chinese. It occurs as a component in not one but two forms.
906 心 心 heart (fat)
CMP This is the first of those two forms, and occurs when this component appears on the bottom of characters. As in Western prose and poetry, we’ll often equate the heart with an emotion or emotional event.

907 心 心 heart
The central curve suggests the actual heart, surrounded by three gouts of blood.
[4 STROKES RANK 90]

908 志 志 aspiration
Scholarly accomplishments were punishingly difficult to achieve in ancient China, so much so that it becomes easy to interpret scholarly emotion as aspiration.
[7 STROKES RANK 542]
Sadness and sorrow are prime examples of negative emotions.

Central to all the emotions is loyalty.

A giant heart threatens to fill up the doorway. It keeps growing and expanding! Any more of this, and you’ll be smothered in the room. As it expands, the moist tissue gives off lots of water vapor, so everything feels stuffy as well.

In ancient times, one’s breath was the exhaust (so to speak) of one’s own heart-felt emotion.

Family relations are emotion-laden connections. A female relation that causes the breath of a senior family member to increase in intensity might well be a daughter-in-law.
914 忘 忘 forget
Forgetting is metaphorically akin to the *perishing* of emotion. The ‘perish’ bit looks like a heavy anvil, hammering down on the heart to shrink it.

915 态 态 attitude
BF That guy’s got a real attitude. It’s as if there’s *too much* emotion leaking out of his heart.

916 恩 恩 kindness, favor
Because the gods in heaven have hearts, they will grant us blessings and favors.

917 嗯 嗯 how come? why?
Our mouth expresses wonderment about the sudden unexpected kindness and favor that fell our way.

918 患 患 trouble, disaster
BF When several emotions are strung together, this may be a sign of trouble. How so? Disaster brings with it a plethora of emotions. It may help to view the ‘strung together’ component as a couple of weights attached to a sharp spear. An enemy is attacking your heart, and only trouble or disaster will follow.

919 思 思 think, consider
BF An alien field, which has somehow come to life, pounds on my heart repeatedly to try to kill me. I have to think real hard if I want to save myself.

920 忌 忌 envy, be jealous
BF A heart concerned only with the self easily envies others, since there is no room for generosity of feeling.
921 慧 慧 intelligence, wisdom
BF It takes a good deal of intelligence to create a broom using an animal heart.

The ‘broom’ component itself looks like some kind of Rube Goldberg device that only someone possessed of extraordinary wisdom and intelligence could create.

922 惑 惑 confuse
BF For me, choosing the perfect wife is so emotional—I don’t know if I should choose my childhood sweetheart or the girl I met in graduate school. I’m so confused!

923 想 想 think, believe
It’s amazing how often Chinese embed charming metaphors into their characters. For example, here we see the (metaphorical) appearance of a heart as a thought or belief.

924 悬 悬 suspend, hang
The county bigwig has his private clothes rack in his office. He is so forthright and outgoing it’s as if he hangs his heart there each day.

925 感 感 feel, sense
Pouring salt on a wound is a famous way of increasing feeling, albeit in a negative sense. Here, the open wound is on some one’s heart.

926 愿 愿 sincere, honest
BF What emotion do you feel when you visit a pristine mountain spring? Whatever it is, it’s sure to be honest and sincere.
927 慈 慈 compassionate, kind
now, at present 779 heart (fat) 906
cí
BF Major religions teach that at any moment, one’s goal should be to be full of an emotion which is compassionate, kind, and loving.

[13 STROKES RANK 1487]

928 惠 惠 kind, benevolent, gentle
insect 890 two 3 heart (fat) 906 hui
BF I saved two insects from the fly swatter. What emotion is that? Great benevolence.

[12 STROKES RANK 1524]

929 怨 怨 blame, reproach, reprove
evening, dusk 655 self” r 851 (altered) heart (fat) 906 yuàn
Lying in bed at night is the worst—you’re prey to all sorts of thoughts and emotions in which you blame yourself for everything wrong in your life.

[9 STROKES RANK 1637]

930 心心 heart (skinny)
CMP This is the second of the ‘heart’ components, which scribes use whenever a ‘heart’ component appears on the left. Imagine the bottom curve of §906 stretched taut and combining with one of the drops of blood. The remaining two drops suggest the bloody nature of this organ.

931 悟悟 realize heart (skinny) 930 me 81 wù
It took me a long time to realize that the heart inside me is the source of the real me.

[10 STROKES RANK 1668]

932 怔怔 panic-stricken heart (skinny) 930 correct 183 zhēng
BF After a panic attack, the heart has to correct its rhythms.

[8 STROKES RANK 2191]

933 性性 nature, character heart (skinny) 930 give birth to 191 xìng
The heart gives birth to the true nature and character of someone.

[8 STROKES RANK 122]
怕

怕  to fear, be afraid

My wife awoke last night from a terrible nightmare, all in fear. It’s a dreadful emotion—her face was white.
When you’re truly busy your heart is working so furiously it’s in danger of perishing.

It’s easy to confuse this character 忙 with 忘 (§914) since both combine 心 (§269) with one or the other forms of ‘heart’. But the ‘f’ in ‘forget’ is like the ‘f’ in ‘fat’—‘forget’ uses the ‘fat’ heart. Coldy efficient executives, ‘busy’ all the time, are in real danger of crowding emotion out of their lives completely. In 忙, the skinny ‘heart’ at the left will soon be pushed off the page to perish (or so it appears).

A badly surprised man finds his heart beating wildly—very fast. It takes a couple of minutes for him to regain control.

You fully understand the issue when your heart is able to direct your behavior.

It’s been a rough day at the office. At night, returning to my cozy house, my heart beats calmly at the welcome sight of an environment which is exactly what my soul needs.
939 愤 愤 anger
BF Anger is often the result of emotion that develops with too much haste. If we force ourselves to stay calm in a stressful situation, we can more easily control angry feelings.

940 惯 惯 accustomed, used to
BF Becoming accustomed to something is the process of regarding something as usual and ordinary which at first would have been unusual and special. Imagine linking your heart to this new something to reign in your emotion and so become accustomed to it.

941 悔 悔 regret, repent
BF Shoulda, woulda, coulda. Regret is an emotion that everybody feels.

942 恒 恒 permanent
BF That speech of love was so sincere that it carved not one but two marks on my heart. You weren’t toying with my emotions—our love is a permanent state.

943 片 片 chopped wood
CMP In keeping with its meaning of chopped wood, it’s helpful to regard this component as the elaborated left half of 木 ‘tree’ (§375).

944 臧 臧 lucky, good
BF The battle rages to the right and left! The loyal subject finds himself in the midst of the melee. Suddenly, a huge lance plunges towards his neck, to be stopped at the last instant by a piece of wood that happened to get in the way. What luck—he lives to tell the story.
The lucky guy found a pile of gold coins someone lost. He used a pile of grass to hide his treasure.

This is a distorted version of ‘foot’ (§419), which Chinese scribes use whenever ‘foot’ appears as a left ingredient for characters like 趾, 足, and plenty more.

There are some folks about whom it is said they are so dumb that they cannot walk and talk at the same time. Here’s one of them. Since they’re using their mouth, they come to a complete stop. They are now standing still on their feet.

Whenever you jump, you use your feet to leave the ground for a small bit of time. You try to jump as high as you can.

With one step of his foot, our huge man from §18 quickly moves away from the jeering crowds.

While using your feet to walk, run, or dance, if you lose your balance, you can take a nasty tumble.

I have a lot of chores to do, and very little time. I use my feet to wrap them up by running from one place to the next.

The neighbor’s teenagers trampled all over my garden with their huge, Doc Martens-shod feet, destroying the tiny sprouts.
952 踏
踏 step on, tread, stamp

foot 946 numerous, repeated 565 tà

What does a foot do repeatedly? It steps and stamps, that’s what.

[15 STROKES  RANK 1753]

953 亻 man r

Here’s the squished form of 人 (§311). In this form, it fits into the character square while leaving room for other stuff.

954 仁
仁 benevolence

man 953 two 3 rén

One of the most ideal feelings between two men is benevolence.

[4 STROKES  RANK 1360]

955 什
什 what

man 953 ten 6 shén

We’ve found it’s a good idea to visualize abstract words like ‘what’ by means of well-known concrete phrases that use these words. ‘What the hell⁉’—we’ll use this as our tag phrase for 什. For me, ‘hell’ is spending eternity with the ten men closest to me in life, and that’s how we’ll remember this character.

[4 STROKES  RANK 156]

956 任
任 assume a post

man 953 scholar 8 dab 169 rèn

The right component of 任 is not the ‘king’ of §11! Look closely—the middle horizontal is longer than its upstairs and downstairs neighbors.

Here in the West, academic appointments work differently from ‘regular’ jobs. As he assumes a new post, the administration views this man as a little bit of a genuine scholar. He will receive re-appointments (and ultimately tenure) if he displays scholarly growth.

[6 STROKES  RANK 186]

957 佳
佳 fine, beautiful

man 953 jade tablet 14 jià

We see a person contemplating a jade tablet because it’s so fine and beautiful.

[8 STROKES  RANK 1583]
958 估 估 estimate

1 One of man’s ancient skills is learning to estimate the value of goods.
2 One of your favorite summer jobs in college was the year you worked in the pawnshop downtown. You had to learn to accurately estimate or appraise every old and worthless thing brought in by any man.

[7 STROKES RANK 1326]

959 仲 仲 2nd in seniority

I get the sense that this character originated at a time when small groups typically consisted of three things. The second man in a group of siblings, say, was apt to be the middle in age.

[6 STROKES RANK 1706]

960 伸 伸 stretch, extend

Here’s a man who’s so sure of himself he’s not afraid to express his opinion in any social setting, and thereby extend himself.

[7 STROKES RANK 1161]
Unit 41
Mighty Fine

961 伍伍 5-man squad

The components perfectly describe this meaning. The squad in question was part of the ancient armies of China.

962 何何 denotes interrogation

Men are the ones with all the ability—at least that was the received wisdom for centuries. Now modern science has turned that statement on its head. In the same way, when you turn a statement on its head, you get a question.

963 侍侍 serve, wait upon

BF Men who work in religious Buddhist temples do so to serve God.

964 荷荷 carry a burden

BF Here comes someone carrying a strange burden on their back. What is it? Where are they going? Why are they even bothering with it? It’s a load of grass or hay.

965 但但 but

You’ve heard the expression “down but not out.” Well, here we have a man still lingering over his morning washing up and breakfast when he should be on his way to work—it’s dawn, but he’s not out!
966 百 百  hundred (fraudproof) man r 953  hundred 203 bǎi

Gather one hundred men, and group them together. They will check each other and ensure each stays honest. The ‘fraudproof’ part relates to the maintaining of honesty among a group of merchants.

967 宿 宿  stay overnight roof 247  hundred (fraudproof) 966 sù

BF I can sleep anywhere. Just put a roof over my head, and I cheerfully get one hundred winks. I’m always calm in these situations; you might call me fraudproof (sounds like ‘fraudproof’). I prefer to stay overnight so as to better enjoy the company of others.

968 缩 缩  contract, shrink silk r 807  stay overnight 967 suō

I let my silk underwear stay overnight in the washtub. Is anyone surprised that the garments shrunk? Now they’re too tight to be comfortable!

969 仙 仙  immortal man r 953  mountain 21 xiān

BF One feature of any landscape seems eternal and immortal—mountains. By comparing a man to a mountain, the anonymous Chinese artist illustrates immortality.

970 伯 伯  father’s elder brother man r 953  white 201 bó

BF Older brothers can be vicious to their siblings. One man so tormented his younger brother that the brother turned white with fear every time the boy saw his older brother. The boy, now a father himself, never forgot those feelings.

971 付 付  pay man r 953  inch 210 fù

This character shows a hand (a variant of §27) handing over a little something to he man on the left. That’s what it means to pay something to someone.
to instruct, exhort

 BF I pay a tutor to instruct me. The 'mouth' part shows him delivering his lecture as loudly as possible. I pay through the nose, and must pay attention as well.

mansion

 BF To buy a mansion, you have to pay and pay for this luxurious type of shelter.

add, attach

We are so attached to the picturesque hills outside town that we are glad to pay extra taxes and fees to keep them pristine and beautiful for us and future generations.

to urge

 When men get urges to go to specific places, they use their feet to get them there. Of course, nowadays, we use cars, trains, and planes to scratch those itchy urges, but this was not so in the days of the scribes.

fall forward

 BF The clumsy magician has a tendency to fall forward especially after drinking too much, but here's magic to the rescue! He uses his powers to foretell the situation and right himself.

m for items, things, etc

 Nowadays, groups of items might well include things like 'luggage' or 'designer shirts'. But in ancient times, things were of more immediate use, things like 'cuts of meat'. Here, in fact, some man is about to divide up a freshly-slaughtered ox preparatory to counting out the pieces for distribution.
People naturally gather around gates and doorways in hopes of picking up bits of news or handouts of food, to buy and sell stuff, and so on, so this is a good way to show the idea of many things.

Today there are a million ways to communicate with someone not directly in front of you. Not so in the olden days. Then, a letter was the main way of capturing a person’s speech in a permanent way.

Where is man the master of his domain? Why, where he lives, of course!

A man appropriately decked out in leather garments and shoes appears very imposing.

This means almost the same thing as both or two, but it tends to be spoken whenever there are two people involved.

I’ve been waiting for hours on line, and then this man comes up to me holding a sharp arrow in a very threatening manner. Sure enough, he wants to take my place in line.

In times of peace, men use their swords to cut down trees and crops.
985 俄 俄  Russian
Russian men are very egotistical.

986 休 休  to rest
BF A person leans against a tree to get a bit of rest.
Sooner or Later

987 保 保 protect, defend  man r 953 foolish, stupid 393 bǎo
BF A man might try to use a foolish puppet to deceive the enemy into thinking that there are more men than there are. That’s a well-known ploy to defend a settlement. [9 STROKES RANK 266]

988 堡 堡 fortress  protect, defend 987 earth, soil 9 bǎo
BF In olden days, fortresses were lines of protection and defense constructed from giant walls of earth. [12 STROKES RANK 1521]

989 体 体 body*  man r 953 root or stem of plant 378 tǐ
BF The body is the root of a man or woman’s physical essence. [7 STROKES RANK 149]

990 例 例 example, instance  man r 953 arrange, line up 659 lì
Why is this man so busy lining things up? They are jelly beans from a new bag of candy, and they show off all the examples of colors and flavors of the jelly beans. [8 STROKES RANK 547]

991 倒 倒 topple, fall over  man r 953 arrive 756 dǎo
It’s midnight, and I watch this tableau from the safety of my bedroom window. An odd, caped man has chased some other man down the street in a threatening manner. Indeed, as this man arrived at the safety of his house, he fell over from an excess of anxiety. (At this, the caped man ran away.) [10 STROKES RANK 608]
992 隹 隹  short-tailed bird

This pictograph is both a component and a very low frequency independent character. Short-tailed birds include pigeons, crows, and the like.

It’s easy to confuse the right part with 主, ‘master’ (§920). But note carefully: ‘master’ has only three horizontals, while ‘bird’ has four! Birds fly over masters, so they deserve a ‘higher’ rank, and the additional chevron emphasizes this.

[8 STROKES  RANK 5837]

993 堆 堆  to heap up

Birds rarely perch on the ground. The only way this could happen is if the soil was heaped up to fool the bird into thinking of it as a perch.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1370]

994 推 推  push

Geese are becoming a positive nuisance in many parts of the United States, and courageous people in public parks often use their hands on these short-tailed birds in order to push their way through a flock.

[11 STROKES  RANK 505]

995 唯 唯  only, alone

Many years ago, in London’s Hyde Park I was fascinated to watch patient men who had, after a fashion, trained the wild pigeons there. Standing stock still, and teaching the short-tailed birds to use their hand as a perch, these avian trainers got one bird at a time—one bird alone—to peck seeds from the lips of their mouths.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1094]

996 崔 崔  lofty

When the short-tailed bird flies to the top of the mountain, it takes a lofty flight path.

[11 STROKES  RANK 2552]

997 催 催  to urge*

We urge lofty behavior upon our friend before things get too out of hand.

[13 STROKES  RANK 2064]
Suddenly—with no warning—the flock of short-tailed birds flying overhead showers you with their filthy droppings.

BF Birds worthy enough of being kept on ice conform to a certain standard.

This guy is a real bird-brain. He’s so enthusiastic about bird-watching and all things pertaining to birds (especially those with short tails), that his entire way of thinking is organized into bits of emotion which flutter around inside him like birds.

The best example of something being burnt or scorched—in a good sense—is the notion of a large and short-tailed bird being slow roasted over a fire for dinner.

When you scorch or burn something, you darken its color. This rich dark color reminds me of your beautiful, smoking hot eyes whenever I look at them.

A flock of short-tailed birds sits on a tree. If we could sneak up on them without alerting them, we could gather them by the dozens!
1004 雇 雇 employ  
Jobs can seem constricting and confining, just like solitary confinement in prison. Others regard themselves in their employ as caged short-tailed birds with the only way out firmly blocked by the door.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1817]

1005 雁 雁 wild goose  
How do birds fly in China? Not in a v-formation, for they don’t have this letter! In China, they say that migrating birds fly in a 人-shape (§311). The Chinese therefore see wild geese as a flock of short-tailed birds launching themselves in 人-formation from a higher cliff.

[12 STROKES  RANK 2553]

1006 鷹 鷹 eagle  
Scribes emphasize the nobility and grandeur of the eagle by illustrating the bird-ness of the wild goose.

[18 STROKES  RANK 1927]

1007 伏 伏 bend over  
The only way the man can pet the cute doggie is if he bends over to do it.

[6 STROKES  RANK 1389]

1008 停 停 stop, pause  
1 When the man, a typical tourist, first encountered the beautiful pagoda, its beauty and grace forced him to stop in his tracks.

2 Here’s a man in such a religious trance that he bumps his nose on the pagoda that he was coming to pray in. That forced him to stop!

[11 STROKES  RANK 693]

1009 仰 仰 look up  
A man who is holding his head high is looking up.

[6 STROKES  RANK 1368]
1010 值 值 to be worth  man r 953  straight, vertical 16 zhi
Here’s a silly image. If you want to buy a person, you go to a person store, where all the available people are hung neatly on the walls, all straight and vertical. Trying to make a selection? Check the labels next to each piece of merchandise—it tells you exactly how much each is worth! [10 STROKES RANK 600]

1011 侧 侧 inclined to  man r 953  standard, norm 431 cè
People who do normal stuff all the time are inclined to keep on doing it. [8 STROKES RANK 1220]

1012 侦 侦 to spy  man r 953  foretell 170  cowrie 430 zhēn
BF How do you spy on someone? The man here can foretell the person’s actions with a device made from a cowrie shell. [8 STROKES RANK 1479]
Unit 43
Silence is Golden

1013 侯 侯 archery target

BF A man shooting an arrow into the air. A covering—perhaps a roof or a tree, but most likely the archery target—stops it. The change on the top of ‘cover’ makes the dab look like a handle, so it’s easy to move the target.

More commonly, this character refers to a marquis, a Chinese nobleman. Perhaps only noblemen with the leisure their class afforded them were able to practice archery.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1756]

1014 侯 侯 time, season

BF “Time flies like an arrow.” Well, here’s that arrow’s path, unfortunately very short, cut short by the archery target, perhaps a metaphor for death itself.

[10 STROKES  RANK 341]

1015 他 他 he

Human beings are human precisely because we each one of us store all our different traits in a single body. In this case we concentrate on one man. He can be clever but also dumb, considerate but also selfish, outgoing but also shy, and so on and so on.

[5 STROKES  RANK 10]

1016 化 化 change, transform

The one constant thing in a person’s life is change. Hooking a symbol like ‘ancient ladle’ to a man emphasizes the changes and transformations that are ever present.
The most amazing transformation in the plant kingdom, in my opinion, is to observe how a green plant changes as it develops a beautiful, fragrant blossom.

Note that the ‘ten’ is slightly altered—the cross-stroke is much nearer the top of the vertical than is usual, as if to resemble a stage for all to see the transformation to take place. What merits such display? Something glorious will ensue, and everyone deserves to see it.

This character encompasses half of a freshman economics course. Wealth supports the transformation of resources into goods and commodities that you can sell to create even more wealth!

In a healthy human relationship, one person brings order to the life of the beloved, and vice versa.

Here’s a man just walking along, minding his own business. Suddenly, he trips over a ladle hidden by leaves (see §458) and in an instant he finds himself leaning forward at a dangerous angle. Will he fall or regain his balance?

BF The ‘towel’ component in §133 has been altered to look like the character 手, quite different from the ‘hand’ 手 of §27. (We’ll discuss this second ‘hand’ many units ahead, but in the meantime think of a hand in the form of a closed fist.) Perhaps the fist emphasizes the aggressive action of the man, who is preparing to invade the domain of a broom handler. Apparently, sweeping is a very territorial occupation. Who knew?
1023 依 依  count on, depend on  
BF The man over there was so nicely dressed in smart clothing that we instinctively knew we could count on him for assistance.  
[8 STROKES  RANK 568]

1024 似 似  seem, appear  
BF During Mardi Gras, men use unusual costumes to appear to be something they are not.  
[6 STROKES  RANK 431]

1025 谁 谁  who  
An owl is a bird with a very short tail whose cry sounds like speech. The owl calls out “Hoo, hoo—who, who.”  
[10 STROKES  RANK 648]

1026 维 维  fiber, hold together  
BF I’ve trained my little short-tailed bird to fly back and forth carrying lightweight silk threads each time. Gradually we build up the strength of the composite fiber until such time as we can pull the two sides and hold them together with this length of fiber.  
[11 STROKES  RANK 520]

1027 偏 偏  inclined to one side  
The safe fell out the window, and a man was crushed to death. Now he is inclined to one side—in fact, his head points backwards.  
[11 STROKES  RANK 1204]

1028 售 售  sell*  
BF The market is falling! The price of chicken is plummeting, as you see here—that’s why the short-tailed bird’s mouth is on the bottom. If we don’t sell now, for whatever we can get, we’ll lose everything!  
[11 STROKES  RANK 1114]

1029 符 符  tally, symbol, sign  
In ancient China, absent computers, shopkeepers tallied purchases via marks on small slices of bamboo so customers (and clerks) knew how much to pay.  
[11 STROKES  RANK 1205]
1030 债 债 debt  man r 953  responsibility 439  zhài
Paying off debt is a man’s primary responsibility.  [10 STROKES  RANK 1223]

1031 袋 袋 pouch, bag, pocket  take the place of 983  clothing 839  dài
Pockets help take the place of bulky clothing.  [11 STROKES  RANK 1310]

1032 贷 贷 loan, borrow  take the place of 983  cowrie 430  dài
A loan takes the place of your own money.  [9 STROKES  RANK 1605]

1033 腐 腐 rotten, putrid, stale  mansion 973 (altered)  meat 317  fǔ
BF One of the workmen left a ham sandwich in one of the rooms of the mansion they worked in. They only realized it, days afterwards, when the stench of rotting meat filled the house.  [14 STROKES  RANK 1576]

1034 巿 巿 left step  dab 169  man r 953  CMP
Let’s interpret this radical as a ‘little man’, the metaphor being applied to the left side of the person. For most people, this is the weaker, and smaller, side.

Imagine a person in front of you facing left. Although the heel of the foot is missing, this component clearly shows the left foot. The dab suggests the presence of the right foot, just visible next to it.

Since the ancients associated the left with weakness, this component also has the meaning ‘walk slowly’.

1035 行 行 firm, business  left step 1034  one 2  fourth 25  hàng
Stare for a bit at the right hand ‘one fourth’ assembly. See how it is a mirror image—sorta kinda—of ‘left step’? Starting a business is a complicated procedure. Prudent entrepreneurs proceed carefully, step by step. Finally, when everything comes together, as the steps do here, are they ready to commence operations.  [6 STROKES  RANK 53]
1036 得 得 verbal particle  left step 1034  dawn 65  inch 210  de
As a grammatical particle, we Chinese speakers use this word to show how some action is carried out.

The ‘left step’ conveys the idea of action. We (figuratively) need to wait for dawn until there’s enough light to show us the result of the action. Then, with the proper lighting, we can measure to the inch the nature of change to the verb.

[11 STROKES  RANK 39]

1037 征 征 go on a journey  left step 1034  correct 183  zhēng
 BF Setting off on a journey, particularly in the pre-automobile era of human history, involved literally taking steps toward your goal following the correct path.

[8 STROKES  RANK 739]

1038 惩 惩 punish, discipline  go on a journey 1037  heart (fat) 906  chéng
 BF Proper discipline is a journey filled with emotion. You keep your children (for example) on the proper path.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1821]
This character puts me in mind of the German military getups common in nineteenth century operetta. Soldiers goosestepping to the left, capped by ornate helmets with tall ‘ten’-shaped (that is, cross-shaped) ornaments, while a netful of fabric weighted down by medals festoons their single heart.

BF Imagine that the ‘left step’ is a symbol of regulation, in that all citizens march to the same step. Laws, written and recorded with pens, help rule society.

When you march as confidently as a king in the direction of your destination, you’ll get there sooner rather than later.

We have earlier imagined a Buddhist temple as a place to enter and seek refuge. In this character, this process is made more explicit. A petitioner steps forward into the temple, preparing to stay for some time.
1043 徒徒 disciple, pupil, follower  
 BF In antiquity, ‘left’ is associated with clumsiness, shadiness, ineptitude, and other sinister attributes. So the left steps of a young person associated with the confident skillful walking of a Master is a way to refer to a disciple or pupil who still has a lot to learn from their teacher. [10 STROKES RANK 1060]

1044 径径 path, track  
 BF Men taking their steps in the same place every day to do the same work; that’s how paths get worn in the forest. [8 STROKES RANK 1307]

1045 御御 control, manage  
 BF Effective bosses manage their work step by step, and make sure to offload each task properly. [12 STROKES RANK 1381]

1046 循循 follow, abide by  
 BF I am happy to follow Hercules into battle. He’s got the shield, and he bears the brunt of the fighting, while I step behind him in the relative calm there. [12 STROKES RANK 1744]

1047 八八 eight (v)  
 CMP The ‘v’ stands for variant. When used as a component, the next character 八 comes out as 八. It’s as if the praying hands of the next panel relax immediately after the photo is snapped. In this relaxed pose, the finger tips point downward, as we see in this variant form.
Hands in prayer exert a strong pull for artists and photographers. Imagine here that some aspiring photographer attempts to capture hands in prayer from the side. Unfortunately, his own hands slip, and he only captures the upper portion of the pose. What we see are eight fingers in profile. Chinese scribes often associate ‘eight’ with the concept of ‘abundance’, and on occasion, we will too.

The number eight has a special significance for Chinese people. In the Cantonese language, the pronunciation of 八 makes it sound like a word meaning ‘rich’ or ‘abundant’, so ‘eight’ too becomes lucky. This happy connotation has since spread to Mandarin-speaking regions as well.

When a lot of elder brothers—representing the best of several clans—get together, you can bet there will be plenty of words exchanged between them.

Normally, people are dull and placid, but if we convert to something positive, then we will be pleased, a positive emotion.

When the discussion group meets to review a book, it always leads to a noisy exchange of views. The doorway reminds us that we observe a view through it.

If you don’t mind a slightly highfalutin’ image, the speaking you do with someone else involves exchanging speech between you.
1053 总 总 always, anyway

Every language has little words that appear all the time in speech in many contexts. They’ve all got many different meanings—like English ‘just’ or ‘anyway’—that sharpen the speaker’s expressions in any of several ways. 总 plays such a role in Chinese. An abundance of verbal aspects makes the speaker’s emotion clear to his listener.

1054 聪 聪 intelligent

BF You’ve got to be intelligent to use your ear to identify the proper context and meaning of ‘anyway’.

1055 具 具 tool, utensil

BF I (sounds like ‘eye’) become abundantly productive with the proper tool.

1056 惧 惧 to fear, dread

BF The evil overseer walks around with a heavy tool in his hand, threatening the slaves for the slightest infraction. It led to an emotional climate of fear and dread.

1057 俱 俱 entirely

Wasn’t it Archimedes who said “Give me a lever and I will move the world” (or something like that)? Here’s a man with a tool, and as a result he’s entirely on his own.

1058 真 真 real

With only one or two tools at hand, my weekend projects come out looking amateurish and crummy. But with ten tools at my disposal, the results look real.
1059 慎慎 cautious, careful □ to fear, dread 1056 (altered) □ ten 6 shèn
BF When you’ve been frightened by the same thing ten times in a row, you learn a degree of caution.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1765]

1060 谷谷 cereal, grain □ eight 1048 □ man 311 □ mouth 41 gǔ
BF Look closely at the grim face of a murderer—squinty eyes; large, ugly nose; and a huge, unsightly mouth. He shovels food into that mouth at the breakfast table as if this is his last meal. A cereal killer for sure. (Outrageous wordplay alert!)

[7 STROKES  RANK 1095]

1061 俗俗 vulgar □ man r 953 □ cereal, grain 1060 sú
BF The man with the ‘cereal’ face looks vulgar.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1354]

1062 六六 six □ dab 169 □ one 2 □ eight 1048 liù
Something flat, like the horizontal stroke for ‘one’ suggests something level, perhaps an even number. The eight on the bottom suggests an even number having some relation to eight. Finally, the dab on top suggests an even number which is slightly smaller than eight, a number like six.

[4 STROKES  RANK 478]

1063 小小 small □ eight 1048 □ hooked stick 24 xiǎo
The ‘eight’ stands for the abundance, the fortune that I earned by my own efforts. Here comes someone with a stick-like weapon to try to take a part of it from me in outright robbery. What started as abundance ends up as something small.

[3 STROKES  RANK 83]

1064 示示 show, indicate □ two 3 □ small 1063 shì
BF Young mothers can be awful. Here’s one with two little ones that she’s forever showing off.

[5 STROKES  RANK 425]
Unit 45
Looking Good

1065 际 际  border, boundary  
BF The distant hills show the country’s borders.  
[7 STROKES  RANK 423]

1066 标 标  to mark, label  
In those ancient days before felt-tip markers and embedded microchips, we would have marked our stuff using wooden sticks to show what belongs to us.  
[9 STROKES  RANK 473]

1067 禁 禁  prohibit  
Despoilers of the environment, beware! As you gaze over the fence, the forest shows you its plentiful resources, but you are prohibited from touching them.  
[13 STROKES  RANK 986]

1068 票 票  ticket  
You need a ticket to see a show in London’s West End (equivalent to the Broadway theater district in New York City).  
[11 STROKES  RANK 910]

1069 漂 漂  drift, float  
The path of true love is rarely straight. On the way to a concert, the couple in front bursts into a loud argument. No concerts today! In the water, there are their tickets, floating forlornly in the current.  
[14 STROKES  RANK 1568]

1070 尖 尖  point, tip  
The point or tip is where something little becomes bigger and bigger as you move away from it. (Think of a mountain top.)  
[6 STROKES  RANK 1321]
Dust and dirt form when nature pulverizes earth to form small particles.

Ready for a lesson in visual perspective? Suppose I am speaking to you—that’s me, the man there on the left. You appear to be a smaller person because you are standing farther away.

When men get interested in showing off their possessions, we know they have a surplus at their command—they no longer are worried about sheer survival. To emphasize this, ancient scribes stuck a surplus stroke in the ‘show’ component.

I hold my cup-shaped cup and tea spills out. At first, I thought there was a too much in the cup, but it was me being clumsy—I was holding the cup so it slanted.

At a restaurant, for example, waiters are always pouring water into glasses. There’s always extra water, and by the end of the meal, it’s smeared and spread over the entire table.

The top horizontal of the ‘surplus’ component is missing—so we can regard this component as representing something that is not extra but is essential. Perhaps the ancients regarded tea as a type of grass, so this character represents an essential herb, exactly how tea fanatics regard this brew to this day.
**1077 京**  
**capital city**  
BF Picture yourself as a country cousin in the capital for the first time. You cover your mouth in astonishment. All the monumental buildings, statues, well-dressed strollers, and so on make you feel so small.

[8 STROKES RANK 566]

**1078 凉**  
**cool**  
Ever been to capital city in mid-winter? It’s perceptibly warmer than the surrounding countryside. When it’s icy in the 'burbs, it’s merely cool in the capital.

[10 STROKES RANK 1581]

**1079 惊**  
**startle, to alarm**  
The country cousin in his country’s capital is very ill at ease. His emotions are getting a fierce workout, as a succession of unexpected sights continually startles him.

[11 STROKES RANK 659]

**1080 添**  
**increase**  
It looked like a little something fell from heaven, but it was a coconut from the tall palm tree by the pool. The little boy watered it faithfully, and it sprouted and increased in height rapidly.

[11 STROKES RANK 1859]

**1081 雀**  
**sparrow**  
BF A sparrow is a good example of a small but annoying short-tailed bird.

[11 STROKES RANK 2331]

**1082 截**  
**cut off, sever**  
Prepare for a bloody story: The delinquent took the sparrow and his sword and cut off its head. That’s why the ‘sparrow’ component is altered.

[14 STROKES RANK 1552]
景景 view, scene
BF By light of day, nothing surpasses the spectacle and the view of any major or capital city.
[12 STROKES RANK 814]

琼琼 fine jade
BF We’ve established, back in §221, a connection between jade and the monarchy. The capital is the best part of the king’s domain, so no wonder this character refers to fine jade.
[12 STROKES RANK 2205]

掠掠 plunder
BF The government officials who infest a country’s capital always seem to have their hands out for fees, bribes, or worse. It’s legal plunder!
[11 STROKES RANK 1868]

只只 only
Imagine something in abundance (perhaps a plate piled high with rice) being funneled into someone’s mouth. But a person can only eat so much.
As a result of this interpretation, we’ll sometimes fix the meaning of ‘restricted amount’ when 只 appears as a component.
[5 STROKES RANK 97]

积积 amass, accumulate
Picture a small pile of grain. The pile contains a fixed and restricted amount. However, if we acquire lots and lots of piles, we will have amassed valuable property.
[10 STROKES RANK 728]

职职 duty, job
BF A guy with big jug ears has a strange job—he only has to scoop up leaves with them.
[11 STROKES RANK 616]

识识 know, recognize
How can you recognize a friend, even in the dark? Only when they speak is this task possible.
[7 STROKES RANK 340]
1090 织 织 weave 丝绸 807 仅 1086 zhī
At the time scribes were standardizing the form of Chinese characters, weaving was still so new as to be that era’s “hi tech”-nology. As such, its early use was restricted only to the use of silk thread. [8 STROKES RANK 578]
BF Eight private things all at once—it’s not possible to keep them all private. Before you know it, everything’s public.

BF Even in ancient times, when personal speech was used in the context of public affairs it was subject to litigation.

You know how your eyes get big when you look with envy at someone else’s jewelry, fancy car, or trophy spouse? Someone’s eyes are growing round and large—the eyes are overflowing their usual borders—at the sight of the abundance that belongs to their best friend. If you are truly so envious of their material achievement, then how strong a friendship can it really be?

Noble families accumulated a lot of junk over the generations, junk which they nevertheless tried to hide when the revolution came. They tried storing their stuff down an old, abandoned mineshaft, but there was an extreme quantity of stuff, too much to fit.

The earth is very helpful to us as we try to make a living in this cold world. By virtue of its fertile bounty, we can survive.
1096  斯斯  refined
BF There’s something about their stuff that’s unbalanced. Hardly genteel, hardly refined.
[12 STROKES  RANK 168]

1097  基基  base, foundation
1 BF In ancient, barbarous cities, people used the property of those conquered in war as soil to serve as the foundations of their own buildings.
2 This character shows an Eiffel Tower-like structure, whose base rests on the earth.
[11 STROKES  RANK 280]

1098  穴穴  cave, den, hole
The topmost roof emphasizes the sheltering quality of a cave, but it’s useful to interpret the strokes of the ‘eight’ in a visual manner—sloping walls which limit the space and suggest a claustrophobic interior.
[5 STROKES  RANK 1940]

1099  探探  look for, explore
Picture the hand holding a lantern up, so as to see better. We proceed from the depths of caves to the tops of trees as we look for our elusive goal. But we do the caves first; that’s why ‘caves’ appears on top of ‘tree’.
[11 STROKES  RANK 917]

Sometimes the topmost dab is left off when穴 appears as a component, either for reasons of space or because it’s not necessary to emphasize the middle of the roof. Compare §§1098 and 1099.

1100  深深  deep
Imagine a body of water so deep that it encompasses the depths of caves to the highest tree. Watch out—you could drown in such deep water.
[11 STROKES  RANK 401]
It’s impossible not to be struck by the elemental reaction of a man to a roaring fire. He stands in surprise, arms raised in awe.

Two fires yield scorching hot conditions.

Go ahead, pour water onto that scorching hot pan. After the steam clears, the degree of heat will be much weaker than it was. Also, the average of cool water with something scorching hot is a much more bland condition.

If you put one lid on a fire, it’s extinguished.

A scene from your worst nightmare—in front of you, an enraged wild boar is charging you. But behind you rages an out-of-control forest fire. What to do? You’ll need every dose of cleverness and sharpness to get out of this one.

No matter how well-matched you are with your partner or mate, there will be fiery fights between you and that person.

You put—carefully and safely—a bit of fire on top a high platform, and you get a lamp.
1108 烟 烟  smoke
Because of fires, there’s always smoke!
yān
[10 STROKES RANK 967]

1109 烦 烦  vexed, annoyed
BF Most people regard vexatious feelings as being fire-like.
fán
[10 STROKES RANK 1253]

1110 秋 秋  autumn
BF Autumn is a fun time now that the harvest work is complete. Of course, we harvest the grain, but there’s time for gathering ’round the fire for singing and snuggling.
qiū
[9 STROKES RANK 1151]

1111 愁 愁  worry about
As a child, my emotion in autumn, at the start of the new school year, was worry about the new term.
chóu
[13 STROKES RANK 2113]

1112 炉 炉  stove
BF The fire on the other side of the door, safely imprisoned inside the stove, provides toasty warmth on a bitter winter day.
lú
[8 STROKES RANK 1980]

1113 关 关  shut, close
Dealing with the public in a busy store is no picnic. By the time the day ends, you’ve had it. Once you lock up and close the store, it feels a lot like heaven.
guān
[6 STROKES RANK 127]

1114 联 联  allied (forces), joint (effort)
BF Nobody’s perfect. But when you ally yourself with someone, you shut your ears to their negative aspects.
lián
[12 STROKES RANK 356]
1115 郑 郑  serious, earnest  
新年的除夕。他们关闭了整个
城镇的大部分区域，举行一些
严肃的派对。

[8 STROKES RANK 1132]

1116 光 光  light, ray  
1 除非火势失控，否则它不会移动。但这个字形显示了火的
其特性，火焰会随风飘动。火焰随风飘动的部分
就是它发出的光。

2 另一种考虑方式：水平线代表
海平面，部分遮挡了光线或
日出。底端的弯曲线条显示
太阳光束的反射，而上方的
线条可以被认为是太阳光束
发散出来。

[6 STROKES RANK 290]
Unit 47
Keeping Up

1117 业 业  trade, industry  a machine  eight (v) 1047  yè
BF The assembly of horizontal and vertical struts represents some factory machine, the tools of some industry. You can think of the pair of dabs as a wish for abundance, or as sparks thrown off by the manufacturing process.

1118 恋 恋  feel attached to  dab 169  trade, industry 1117 (altered)  heart (fat) 906  liàn
BF The scribes are using the component for 'trade' upside-down, and the opposite of 'business' is 'pleasure'. A dab of glue attaches this pleasure to the heart, symbolizing a feeling of attachment.

1119 亚 亚  inferior  trade, industry 1117  one 2  yà
A country relying on only one industry will have an inferior economy.

1120 恶 恶  evil  inferior 1119  heart (fat) 906  è
Evil is an inferior kind of emotion.

1121 显 显  appear, be obvious  day, sun 63  trade, industry 1117  xiān
Most technological advances work by taking an existing technique and expanding upon it. Every so often, though, someone creates something truly innovative. It’s as if someone shines a bright light, bright as the sun, on an existing industry to discover something which, in hindsight, appears obvious.
1122 湿 湿  wet, damp
When a silk dress gets wet, the location of the water spot is obvious.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1743]

It’s easy to forget whether the 日 component goes above or below in §§1121 and 1122. With 显, the ‘sun’ goes up top, as befits a guiding light or lamp. In 晋, on the other hand, it’s better to think about how the ‘日’ contains within it the outline of the doorway through which we pass, and so belongs on the bottom.

1123 晋 晋  enter, advance
When you enter a building, you block the sun and become inferior to it.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1645]

1124 普 普  general, universal
BF If something—a custom, expression, fad, and so on—advances into the front ranks of culture to the point where it can be found abundantly, then it is general or universal.
[12 STROKES  RANK 630]

1125 严 严  strict
The mountain-climbing instructor is so strict that she’ll only allow us to attempt climbing inferior cliffs. Hiss, boo!
[7 STROKES  RANK 545]

1126 盖 盖  cover*
The silversmith created a cover for the costly vessel that featured several kings cavorting in strange costumes.
[11 STROKES  RANK 1052]

1127 米 米  rice
The presence of eight different strokes in all different directions is supposed to suggest rice grains scattered all over the floor.
[6 STROKES  RANK 575]
1128 来 来  come
When the unexpected guest comes, you need to prepare one additional portion of rice for the meal.
[7 STROKES  RANK 15]

1129 粗 粗  coarse
The shelves of ‘moreover’ provide a place to sort grains of rice. But rice grains are small, and this method only works for very coarse grains.
[11 STROKES  RANK 1414]

It’s easy to mistake 粗 ‘coarse’ with 租 ‘rent’ (§414), especially since the left components of both refer to rice or grain. But 禾 typically refers to crops, portions of which can be remitted as rent. The character 米, on the other hand, usually refers to prepared food, which can definitely be described as coarse, and is not suitable for rent.

1130 菜 菜  fallow fields
Consider a fallow field. In the fallow state, it brings no food or wealth to the family, so they can’t wait for crops—even grass—to come to this field.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1196]

1131 糟 糟  spoiled
Someone stole my rice, and by the time I got to court, after all the sparring between plaintiff and defendant, it was too late. The rice had spoiled.
[17 STROKES  RANK 1918]

1132 断 断  break, snap, cut
As the vehicle approached the mine, something snapped. As a result, a whole load of rice fell off the unbalanced car and down the mineshaft.
[11 STROKES  RANK 434]

1133 料 料  stuff
A prime example of stuff is a cup of rice.
[10 STROKES  RANK 557]
1134 素 素 kind, type, class
de rice 1127  
(1) dog 332  
lei

(Note the dog’s eye merges with the lower right grain of rice.) Here are two prototypical types of organisms in the vegetable and animal kingdoms—rice and blind dogs (that’s why there are no eyes!).

1135 奥 奥 profound, abstruse
de safe house, security 265  
de rice 1127  
de big 330  
ào

BF Here’s a remote part of your safe house. A big pile of rice lies undetected because it’s so dark and obscure. In this way, the Chinese symbolize something abstruse and profound.

1136 哦 哦 oh! (surprised understanding)
de mouth 41  
de profound, abstruse 1135  
o

The cry of surprised understanding involuntarily proceeds from your mouth. You finally understand the abstruse point that the professor was trying to explain.

1137 娄 娄 trouble, blunder
de rice 1127  
de woman 581  
lóu

BF In the deeply misogynistic society of ancient China, it was surely a male scribe who designed a character in which trouble was not only ascribed to women, but compared in number to grains of rice.

1138 楼 楼 multi-story building
de tree 375  
de trouble, blunder 1137  
lóu

In buildings with more than one story, it’s easy for a young suitor to climb a tree to get into trouble. There’s a great risk of discovery!
1139 尚 尚  still, yet  

The word 'still' can divide time into two periods: When he fired the gun, it was still raining. Here, the firing of the gun marks a boundary in time, up to which it was raining. Afterwards, well, we don’t yet know.

The ‘eight’ represents abundance, and the vertical stroke divides it in two. Time up to a point is known—it is the future that’s unknown and scary. The open end of the ‘facing’ component seems to point away from what’s known. Thus, in this metaphorical and slightly convoluted manner, we see that this character represents ‘still’. (Perhaps it’s better to just memorize it!)

When we encounter this character as a component, we’ll ascribe one of several meanings to it. We might interpret it as a ‘dividing point’ or a ‘sharp boundary’. Sometimes, the ‘borders’ subcomponent (see §127) will often imply that one part of our interpretation contains the other part.

[8 STROKES  RANK 878]

1140 堂 堂  room for a special purpose  

BF Here’s a division between the general outdoors—the earth—and the indoors (everything which isn’t outdoors). A room has a special purpose—to shelter us from the elements.

[11 STROKES  RANK 980]

1141 掌 掌  palm of the hand  

BF The palm of the hand is the part that actually holds things. This character represents a boundary of the hand between the fingers, which can hold things but will easily drop them, and the palm, which holds things well but can’t grab.

[12 STROKES  RANK 890]

1142 常 常  often  

BF Despite the visual decomposition, this looks to me like a hanging man (see §131) on a makeshift gallows. I’ve often thought that this is a ghastly fate to be avoided at all costs!

[11 STROKES  RANK 187]
Unit 48
Not So Fast!

1143 党 党 political party
still, yet 1139  son 288 dāng
A group of men (all of whom are somebody’s sons) gather together in opposition to those whose opinions are various and different. Thus is born a political party.
[10 STROKES RANK 411]

1144 赏 赏 admire
still, yet 1139  cowrie 430 shǎng
BF Shells have the potential of becoming beautiful jewelry, engendering admiring glances from all.
[12 STROKES RANK 1450]

1145 倘 倘 if, in case
man r 953  still, yet 1139 tǎng
The man on the left is short-hand for all things human—affairs, events, possessions, and so on. The ‘still, yet’ component implies division. For human affairs, the division is between true and false or between happened and not (yet) happened—in other words, the same relation as determined by if or in case of.
[10 STROKES RANK 2118]

1146 幸 幸 luck, good fortune
earth, soil 9  eight (v) 1047  dry 10 xìng
BF This is an easy character to remember if you imagine it originated in a wet and marshy part of China. A person with land which is both abundant and dry is blessed with good fortune.
[8 STROKES RANK 902]

1147 羊 羊 sheep
eight (v) 1047  three 4  scepter 5 yáng
I don’t care what the diagram shows—here’s the skin of a fat, plump sheep. From top down, we see the two ears, the face, the four legs, and the tail.
[6 STROKES RANK 1337]
1148 美 美 beautiful
    For a farmer, there’s no sight more beautiful than a big, plump sheep. (Here, the sheep’s tail has been docked.)
    [9 STROKES RANK 151]

1149 善 善 good, kind
    Sheep are well-known as gentle animals, and a person whose speech is like a sheep is sure to be good and kind.
    [12 STROKES RANK 749]

1150 洋 洋 vast
    BF Think of a sponge in the shape of a sheep. You place it in water, it soaks up liquid, and the sheep grows till it becomes vast in size.
    [9 STROKES RANK 803]

1151 样 样 appearance*
    BF In agrarian settings, what counted most towards a landowner’s peace of mind was the proper appearance of wealth—agriculture, symbolized by a tree; and livestock, represented by a sheep.
    [10 STROKES RANK 88]

1152 详 详 detailed
    BF Imagine that a sheep gets to make a speech for a change. Sheep, being sheep, would copy each other’s speech slavishly, down to the last detail!
    [8 STROKES RANK 1439]

1153 拳 拳 fist
    This sketch shows part of a hand knocking down some other man, shaking loose a couple of drops of blood or sweat in the process. Only the fist is capable of this power.
    [10 STROKES RANK 1784]

1154 兰 兰 orchid
    The orchid is a flower with an abundance of positive attributes, which is why it’s such a special flower. Fragrance, brilliant color, and long-lastingness are its three most important qualities.
    [5 STROKES RANK 642]
We see someone’s hand, intent on cutting off and stealing a rare orchid specimen. At the last moment, its beauty captivates him, and bars him from this destructive deed.

Why would anyone want to cook an orchid? Nevertheless, you can imagine that applying heat to an orchid or other fine flower accelerates the processes of decay and rot.

BF In time of war, you want to transform all your wealth to a form which makes it easy to move. That’s difficult—you’ve been very successful and you own a lot. The solution that worked centuries ago and which works now is to convert your entire fortune, all your abundance, into gold.

乎 is an interrogatory particle, capable of expressing interrogation, surprise, surmise, or admiration. The character 手, an old friend from §26, has an abundance of prepositional meanings, so it’s reasonable to combine these two characters to form this particle. Which meaning do you want??

Expressions of surprise or surmise are often accompanied by puffs of air as we exhale from our mouth.

When there is a lot of dry, arid land, the wind and weather can blow away all the high points, and fill in all the low points, so that the landscape turns into something flat, level, and perfectly even.
1161 苹 苹  apple  
 BF Legend has it that William Tell shot an apple off his son’s head with an arrow. Good thing the boy’s head was sufficiently flat and level to keep the apple from rolling off into the grass before his dad could shoot it!
 [8 STROKES  RANK 2478]

1162 评 评  comment, criticize  
 BF It’s amazing that people who deliver the most devastating criticism often deliver the speech with their verdict in a very flat affect.
 [7 STROKES  RANK 809]

1163 萍 萍  duckweed  
 BF Although the components are subtly altered in comparison with the previous panel, nevertheless they somehow suggest an apple that grows in the water. In this case, the surprising item is duckweed, which primarily provides nutrition for ducks, but can also be gathered and eaten by people, like an apple.
 [8 STROKES  RANK 2478]

1164 半 半  half, semi  
 BF Here is two of something, cut in half by a scepter or other mighty stick. The force of the blow is so severe that many chips fly in the air.
   It’s easy to confuse the two characters 平 (§1160) and this character 半. The top vertical of 平 is flat, like its definition. The flying chips at the top of 半 represent a fraction of the original object; ‘half’ is also a fraction.
 [5 STROKES  RANK 513]

1165 伴 伴  companion, partner  
 BF A person is only half a soul without their life partner by their side.
 [7 STROKES  RANK 1298]

1166 单 单  single, sole  
 BF The ‘first’ and ‘one’ emphasize the singularity of a certain someone. The abundance is his alone—he doesn’t have to share.
 [8 STROKES  RANK 389]
1167 首 首 head, leader  
BF There's a lot of something on the flat top surface of one's self. It must be hair. What else appears of the tops of heads? In these ancient times, when Chinese characters were becoming developed, imagine that only leaders and heads of state had the privilege of wearing and displaying long, flowing locks.

1168 豆 豆 bean  
This slightly surreal depiction shows a bowl of steaming beans. The bottom horizontal is the table top, and the dabs of the 'eight' both suggest the profile of the bowl and the abundance within. With accurate perspective, the mouth of the bowl should really be elliptical. The smaller horizontal that tops the character suggests the high level of beans within the bowl, or perhaps rising steam.
Some people just can’t get enough beans. For those unusual few, they like nothing more than to shovel ten bowls of beans into their mouths.

When you are happy, the sound from your mouth might well be a contented giggle.

An arrow made out of beans isn’t very good (it’s not worth beans!). If you can shoot it at all, it will only go a short distance.

To me, the twin dabs at the top look like a pair of eyes, whose reflections appear in twin windows. It’s miserable outside—the eyes also resemble drops of rain on the glass—and the poor child imprisoned inside imagines a vision of the sun that formerly shone all the time.

Nowadays, nobody’s making land. By and large, what you see is what there is. But in former days, eons ago, this wasn’t true. Due to violent geological processes, the earth was increasing.
Many religions postulate multiple lifetimes of a soul. This character suggests that a former existence of a man was as a monk.

There’s a herd, a veritable abundance, of these frightening wild beasts in the field. One of them notices me, and immediately threatens me with its open mouth.

In ancient days, walls were built out of heaped earth. What were they protecting? Perhaps the abundant harvest from the earth, or the men of the tribe, returning from raiding forays of their own.

This character illustrates itself in two ways: (1) 夫 is between the two dabs of ‘eight (v)’, and (2) these dabs are between the two horizontals of 夫. Metaphorically, people are the source of abundance, and abundance is the source of people.

So many people have gathered to celebrate some man’s heroic achievements that Times Square is packed beyond belief. Everyone is placed in between everyone else.
1179 立 立 erect, stand

1 A man (altered from the usual; here constructed from 'cover' and 'eight (v)') is standing on one horizontal surface.
2 This character reminds me of the house of cards that I struggled to erect on rainy weekends of my childhood. 立 shows a view from the side of just a portion of this house! The cover controls the abundance of cards on the horizontal surface and keeps them standing up.

[5 STROKES RANK 197]

1180 拉 拉 pull, draw, tug

What does the hand near the puppet have to do to keep it standing? It tugs and pulls at it.

[8 STROKES RANK 324]

1181 啦 啦 indication of excitement, doubt

Expressions of excitement and doubt are indications of increased emotional tension. The 'mouth' indicates the expressive nature of this character, since the mouth is the ordinary vehicle for expression.

[11 STROKES RANK 1194]

1182 部 部 part, section

It's easy to recognize the tourist section of town. Past generations have erected many impressive monuments in the various city squares, each of which looks like a big mouth.

[10 STROKES RANK 84]

1183 位 位 m for persons (polite)

Formal occasions generally demand that people do more standing than at a casual occasion, where people are slouching and chatting. So 'people stand' represents this formal counting word.

[7 STROKES RANK 182]

1184 妾 妾 I (woman's form)

Roll call. All you women, when you hear your name, stand up, and shout out, “Here I am!”

[ STROKES RANK 3242]
1185 jié come close to  
“Come close to me, so I can hold your hand,” said my 97-year-old grandmother.

1186 tóng child  
The only kind of person who can stand up inside a small closet or other confined space are children.

1187 zhuàng run into, collide  
Imagine children running around in a frenzy, and definitely not looking where they’re going. An adult uses her hand as a human ‘bumper’ to avoid collision.

1188 shāng trade, business  
Here, the border symbolizes your house, and the ‘eight mouths’ inside are your big family, always hungry. If you are upright in your business dealings, you will prosper and your family will eat. Notice how, in the interests of efficiency, the bottom stroke of ‘erect, stand’ coincides with the top of ‘borders’.

1189 yīn sound  
This character represents the operation of a microphone, shown standing on end. At the bottom, you see where the sound enters the mechanism, as someone speaks. The microphone’s guts amplifies this sound as it passes through a special horizontal membrane, making it appear more abundant, so everyone can hear, as it passes outward through the cover.

1190 àn dark, dim  
Here you see ‘sound’ crowding out the sun. This is what happens when it gets dark—the realm of sight diminishes in importance, while listening achieves prominence.
意 意  idea, meaning
BF This character expresses a metaphorical meaning for idea or meaning as the ‘sound’ of an emotion.

竞 競  compete, contend
BF Among families, sibling rivalry—especially among boys—is a major source of intense energy. If the elder brother stands firm, he usually wins the competition.

竟 竫  in the end
Think of a nineteenth-century platoon of soldiers. To the stirring sound of bagpipes, these walking men march to battle. In the end, this tactic is successful, and the soldiers win.

境 境  boundary
BF No matter how extensive are your territories and land, if you keep on traveling, in the end you will reach its boundary.
Unit 50

Clever Ducks

1195 培培 bank up with earth
earth, soil 9  erect, stand 1179  mouth 41  péi

Banking involves taking earth, and making it stand up in heaps. Why? To increase fertility, and so to put more food in your mouth.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1152]

1196 端端 end, extremity
erect, stand 1179  mountain 21  express add'l but contrasting info 83  duān

 Refer back to §89. A giant stands erect, and we see examples of his extremities. His head is level with the tops of mountains, while his weight forces his feet underground, where a few of his toes are wedged below the surface of the soil.

[14 STROKES  RANK 916]

1197 倍倍 -fold
man r 953  erect, stand 1179  mouth 41  bèi

A man who is scrunched down so you can only see his mouth but who then takes the trouble to stand up, multiplies his apparent height several-fold.

[10 STROKES  RANK 1392]

1198 章章 chapter, section
sound 1189  ten 6  zhāng

 Refer The sound here is music. Western musical compositions often occur in many parts; ‘ten’ is a stand-in for ‘many’. The parts of a musical composition could be the verses, movements, variations, and so on that form the sections of the composition.

[11 STROKES  RANK 539]
1199 站 站 stop, station  erect, stand 1179 practice divination 172 zhàn
Regardless of the visual decomposition, this character looks to me like someone has stuck a marker (that’s the vertical portion on the right) into a bucket (that’s the mouth on the lower right) of cement which has been allowed to harden. Nothing will budge it. Where it stands erect, that’s the landmark for other vehicles to stop.

[10 STROKES RANK 544]

1200 辛 辛 hardworking  erect, stand 1179 ten 6 xīn
BF A worker standing up for ten hours or more is genuinely hardworking.

[7 STROKES RANK 1463]

1201 辞 辞 diction  tongue 225 hardworking 1200 cí
While learning Chinese, your tongue works hard to get the diction right.

[13 STROKES RANK 1469]

1202 亲 亲 relatives  erect, stand 1179 show, indicate 1064 (altered) qīn
BF Pardon a play on words, but relatives are often people whom you can’t stand! Here, the ‘stand’ part and the ‘show’ part share the central horizontal bar; you often share stuff with relatives. Also, we often reveal personal details with relatives that we wouldn’t dream of telling anyone else. The ‘show’ part is altered slightly, in that the central hook extends all the way up to this central stroke. Sometimes, because they’re relatives, they give you a little extra, a little more than you deserve.

[9 STROKES RANK 362]

1203 新 新 new  relatives 1202 catty 118 xīn
The acquisition of new relatives—by marriage, say—often leads to a sense of unbalance as pecking orders need to be re-affirmed and re-fought.

[13 STROKES RANK 161]

1204 帝 帝 emperor*  erect, stand 1179 (altered) towel 130 di
BF In the presence of the emperor, one must stand especially straight and put on special decorative cloths. We stand on a special platform, and that’s why the platform of the ‘stand’ component is slightly fancier than normal.

[9 STROKES RANK 612]
1205 竭竭 make the utmost effort

BF The team is depending upon you to make the utmost effort! You stand up and approach the starting line. Your senses reel. The pressure mounts, as the crowd’s shouts seem to come from all over the place.  

[14 STROKES RANK 1987]

1206 帝啻 not only

BF The emperor is making a long-awaited and highly infrequent appearance before the people. Is he man or god? He makes his appearance, and it’s clear he’s all-too-human. Not only is his body like those of other men, but there’s something wrong with his mouth—it hangs lower in his face than normal.  

[12 STROKES RANK 4249]

1207 滴滴 drip

Not only is the water radical part of this glyph, but the character also makes reference to the three drops. The ‘towel’ part is extended, in case we need a towel to wipe up the watery mess. Moreover, the extra horizontal bar inside the towel makes us think that the towel is “ancient” (§51). I guess we’re using an old towel for clean up.  

[14 STROKES RANK 1896]

1208 蒂蒂 base of fruit

BF We have to rely, yet again, on metaphor and analogy. In the same way that the base of a fruit is the part on which it rests or is supported, so too is the emperor the person on whom the empire is supported and reliant. The bit of grass up top reminds us that fruit is part of the vegetable kingdom, and the analogy extends to a member of this kingdom (fruit).  

[12 STROKES RANK 1429]

1209 南南 south

States or countries are regions delimited by borders. This character makes reference to ten of these states, with special attention to the ones with abundant dryness. For an empire like China, which is in the Northern Hemisphere, the abundantly hot states are the ones in the south.  

[9 STROKES RANK 307]
1210 喃喃 mumbling

BF Northern people are full of their own special prejudices, often regarding people from southern tropical regions as doing things slowly, perhaps in response to the killing heat they live with. Language is the worst. The mouth sounds of these southerners seem like mumbling to intolerant Northern ears.

[12 STROKES RANK 2233]

1211 献献 offer, donate

In America, it’s hot down south. So south plus dog equals ‘hot dog’. I’m famous for my hot dogs. Next time we have a barbecue, come on over—I’d like to offer you one.

[13 STROKES RANK 1192]

1212 兴兴 prosper

You prosper when things flourish and grow, most often in the context of business. Here’s an example—six things become eight.

[6 STROKES RANK 531]

1213 举举 to lift

The altered ‘dry’ component suggests land that was formerly dry but now isn’t. The farmer’s fortunes are therefore about to prosper. This should lift his spirits.

[9 STROKES RANK 586]

1214 尊尊 honor, venerate

A lot of wine—poured into tiny, inch-high cups—is a symbol of the honor and respect due to our great master upon his retirement. Gānbēi!

[12 STROKES RANK 1134]

1215 奈奈 how can one help?

BF The altered ‘big’ partially obscures a background sketch of someone in clear distress, for we see the wrinkled brow and the tears coursing down each side of her nose. The person in front is clearly sympathetic. He stands there, legs spread out, arms outstretched toward the grief stricken woman, and begs to be of service. How can he help?

[8 STROKES RANK 1624]
慕慕 *admire*

Here’s a person I can really admire. Why? Well, he’s a prosperous farmer, plenty of grass, and a permanently sunny disposition. Furthermore, he’s big-hearted and generous—to an exaggerated extent—to those who have much less than he.

窝窝 *nest, lair*

What’s a nest anyway but a cave or lair inside of which gape the many open mouths of the fledgelings.

薛薛 *marsh grass*

BF Work in the swamps is sweaty and tough. Harvesting the marsh grass demands hard work to heap up the cut grass for gathering. Notice how severely 堆 ‘heap up’ has been altered so as to fit inside the character comfortably.

空空 *empty*

A good example of empty is a cavernous factory room, empty of ongoing work.

腔腔 *body cavity*

The part of a body that is empty is a—body cavity.
Midwives and mothers compare the trauma of giving birth to another awful situation, that of someone standing on a cliff top preparing to throw themselves off.

Police lineup. Two hardworking-looking guys are separated by a curved divider (see the little doorknob on its left?) on one side. Can you distinguish between the innocent bystander and the perpetrator?

The person who regularly eats a portion of meat followed by half of another is bound to get fat.

Note that in the 'inspect' portion on top, the bloody vessel has been abbreviated to a single bloody dot.

If we inspect a sheet of gold, our image will reflect off its surface.
In China, we use scholars to help draw up contracts. With their special knowledge of grammar, they show what the other party owes us in each of the contract clauses.

The shine from the feathers of a beautiful bird can be bright and dazzling.

Suppose I am speaking to you. You appear to be a smaller man because you are standing away from me.

Bamboo is so soft it isn’t useful for many tools. But you can make beads from it to create an abacus for calculating prices and so on.

The hippy parents (relics of the 1960s) were very tolerant. Under their roof, their kids were so messy that grain started growing in the filth!

The wedding was so lavish, they threw rice like it was water. I kept finding grains in my clothes for months, that’s how abundant everything was.
1231 肖 肖 like, similar to 小 1063 (altered) 肉 317 (altered) xiào
BF The ‘meat’ here refers to an animal or person, and we are supposed to marvel at how a small animal—the young of the species—is similar to its parents.

[7 STROKES RANK 2019]

1232 削 削 pare, peel with knife 刃 like, similar to 1231 刀 knife 166 xiāo
With a deftly wielded knife, you make a piece of shapeless wood look like something else by means of skillful peeling away of the wood.

[9 STROKES RANK 1794]

1233 消 消 disappear, vanish 水 523 刀 like, similar to 1231 xiāo
Water is like a magic potion (sometimes). Used properly, it can make stains vanish!

[10 STROKES RANK 439]

1234 悄 悄 quiet, silent 心 (skinny) 930 刀 like, similar to 1231 qiǎo
BF Quietness is a lot like a subdued emotion.

[10 STROKES RANK 1434]

1235 稍 稍 slightly, somewhat 稻 or grain 409 刀 like, similar to 1231 shāo
All grains look similar to one another because the grains of each species are somewhat alike.

[12 STROKES RANK 1373]

1236 除 除 remove, do away with 山 735 餘, remainder 1073 chù
During boom times, there’s plenty of surplus, so much so that we have to remove it to the uninhabited parts of the hills so it’s not in the way.

[9 STROKES RANK 464]

1237 谈 谈 talk, chat 語 615 火 scorching hot 1102 tán
What do we chat about when we chat? We don’t waste time talking about anything but the hottest of topics.

[10 STROKES RANK 474]
1238 称 称 call to, name rice or grain 409 you, thou 1227 chèng
I called out to you, but you didn’t hear, so I threw some rice your way to get your attention (as if at a wedding).

[10 STROKES RANK 449]

1239 突 突 dash forward cave, den, hole 1098 dog 332 tū
BF The thieves tried to sneak up on the banker’s house. They failed to take the dog into account. Out from his den, he dashed forward to grab the lead robber by the seat of his pants.

[9 STROKES RANK 484]

1240 乐 乐 glad to, enjoy show, indicate 1064 (altered) lè
When people enjoy life, they can’t help showing this emotion on their faces, and, indeed, in every action. On the left, the extra curvy stroke connecting the horizontals represents a crinkle line around the eyes that you see around genuinely happy people.

[5 STROKES RANK 619]

1241 继 继 continue, succeed, follow silk r 807 mineshaft 135 rice 1127 jì
BF The construction material was a strange mixture of silk and rice. Don’t laugh—up to now, the repair of the mineshaft had gone fitfully forward, but now with this new stuff, we can continue and finish it in no time.

[10 STROKES RANK 655]

1242 弹 弹 flick, pluck, play instrument bow (weapon) 859 single, sole 1166 tán
I know the left part is a weapon, but its bends are suggestive of two fingertips reaching over to a single guitar string to pluck it.

[11 STROKES RANK 632]

1243 您 您 you (formal) you 1072 heart (fat) 906 nín
In formal situations, my greeting to you is one of respectful emotion.

[11 STROKES RANK 726]
寅

Strictly speaking, proceeding from the top down, you write this character using the following sequence of components: roof (§247), one (§2), let somebody do something (§48), and eight (§1048). It’s hard to create one narrative using all these, so it’s better to hark back to the historical development of this character, which depicts a reclining man under the roof of his house. We know he’s reclining because his hands are crossed on his chest. This especially restful period of slumber most often occurs very early in the morning, between 3–5am.

演

perform, play, act

The rain water that leaked on my head very early this morning, waking me out the best sleep I’ve had in a long time, caused me to jump out of bed and dance around in surprise and shock. Early morning dog walkers peering through my windows thought I was rehearsing for a play.

税

tax, duty

The government forces you to deal with the devil. You give them a portion of your earnings—a tax—which would have been in the form of rice or grain way back when, and, in exchange, the government provides you with services.
clan, sect, faction  

**People of like mind or tradition**—those belonging to the same clan or faction—often show their common bond by hanging out together in the same place, under the same roof.

summing up, aggregate  

**I use strong silk rope to tie up all the sect members, forming one giant aggregate which the police can easily round up.**

footprint, trace, tracks  

**Marching on foot along with the rest of your clan leaves plenty of footprints.**

accuse, charge  

**You were supposed to keep track of my money. But now your hand is empty. I accuse you of stealing it!**

scale, climb  

**I had to stop and catch my breath when I got to the huge hill of beans. It was my task to climb this monster.**
1252 松 松 pine tree
People engaged in public affairs are supposed to be upright like a pine tree, so a good symbol for the pine is a juxtaposition of ‘tree’ with ‘public affairs’.

[pine tree: 8 strokes, rank 895]

1253 炮 炮 cannon, firecracker
The aftermath of firing a cannon is the noise and smoke which envelopes you.

[cannon: 9 strokes, rank 914]

1254 脫 脫 shed, take off
Here’s my recipe for shedding weight. Simply eat more meat and protein, and exchange the fat for muscle!

[shedding: 11 strokes, rank 943]

1255 鮮 鮮 fresh, new
Don’t eat either the fish or the mutton unless they’re very fresh.

[fresh: 14 strokes, rank 958]

1256 辟 辟 law
Surely I’ve been working too hard. The dead body against the wall has just opened its mouth and started talking to me. This is against all natural law!

[law: 13 strokes, rank 2140]

1257 壁 壁 wall, cliff, rampart
The earth upholds the city, symbolized by its laws. What earth formation does that? A high cliff.

[wall: 16 strokes, rank 1380]

1258 填 填 fill in, stuff
That teddy bear isn’t real. He might look it, because they use space-age sand to stuff him.

[fill in: 13 strokes, rank 1970]
1259  欲  欲  wish, desire, want  cereal, grain 1060  owe, lack 465  yù
BF Breakfast time, and the desire for a bowl of nourishing cereal becomes strong. Oops, we’re fresh out of cereal. It’s going to be a long day...
[11 STROKES  RANK 1045]

1260  萨  萨  Buddha, kind-hearted person  grass 94  hills 735  give birth to 1221  sà
BF The hills and the grass and all the other qualities of Mother Nature contribute to the birth of major religious figures like the Buddha.
[11 STROKES  RANK 1046]

1261  烧  烧  burn, cook, run a fever  fire 1101  legendary emperor 374  shāo
When a legendary emperor died, the courtiers used a huge pyre of fire to burn the body. Otherwise, the king’s dreadful disease would spread throughout the court and the country.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1201]

1262  障  障  obstruct, hinder  hills 735  chapter, section 1198  zhàng
BF The invaders will have a tough time capturing us. Nature has divided the hills into sections which obstruct and hinder the enemy’s progress.
[13 STROKES  RANK 1237]

1263  徐  徐  slowly, gently  left step 1034  surplus, remainder 1073  xú
I am walking to market to sell the surplus we grew on our farm this year. It’s a heavy load, and forces me to walk slowly.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1313]

1264  尝  尝  taste, experience, ever  still, yet 1139 (altered)  cloud 751  cháng
The ‘still, yet’ part indicates a transition. In this case, from good times to not-so-good times—hence, the cloud. What a life-altering experience these adverse situations can be!
[9 STROKES  RANK 1621]
1265 偿 偿 compensate, repay

偿 [compensate, repay]  man r 953  taste, experience, ever 1264  chǎng

BF The piper must always be paid. This man’s unfortunate experience requires some sort of compensation.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1329]

1266 灾 灾 disaster, calamity

灾 [disaster, calamity]  roof 247  fire 1101  zāi

BF The roof is on fire! Help us put it out, and avoid a disaster!

[7 STROKES  RANK 1349]

1267 辩 辩 argue, dispute, debate

辯 [argue, dispute, debate]  hardworking (times 2) 1200  speech r 615  biàn

Two of my best workers are really getting into it, and words are flying about. I hope the argument doesn’t get out of hand.

[16 STROKES  RANK 1355]

1268 崇 崇 respect, adulate

崇 [respect, adulate]  mountain 21  clan, sect, faction 1247  chóng

Here, ‘mountain’ is a stand-in for the direction in which our thoughts move, and when the whole clan tends towards these lofty feelings, it indicates respect and adulation.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1482]

1269 煤 煤 coal

煤 [coal]  fire 1101  certain, some 397  méi

In the old days, we needed a certain something to keep the winter fires well stoked. That something was coal. (Nowadays, it’s money!)

[13 STROKES  RANK 1740]

1270衮 衲 imperial robes

衮 [imperial robes]  cover 268  public affairs 1091  clothing 839 (altered)  gǔn

BF Official events for those in public affairs require special clothing and a very fancy head cover. These conditions define the imperial robes of old.

[10 STROKES  RANK 4843]

- 254 -
1271 滚滚 roll, turn, scram! water 523 imperial robes 1270 gǔn
At the height of the religious ceremony, the emperor tripped and rolled down the ornate steps by the altar. His imperial robes had soaked up sacrificial blood, and the gory liquid flew off in drops during this ghastly journey.

[13 STROKES RANK 1542]

1272 燃燃 burn, ignite fire 1101 correct, so 798 rán
When we use fire in the correct manner, it becomes a useful resource by which we ignite stoves and furnaces. Otherwise, it rages out of control, becoming harmful rather than helpful.

[16 STROKES RANK 1553]
An *abstruse* point is apt to be deep; a *bay* is a deep body of *water*.

The *military official* remembered this grisly scene, repeated all too often during the great rebellion: gunfire *showing a corpse*, *inch*-long knife wounds piercing the body.

After witnessing the awfulness of war first hand, the *military official*’s next job was to *show compassion* and attempt to *console* the grieving widows and orphans.

The *hill* people are notoriously shy. When they come to town, they stand together and keep their *moutsh* shut. They always *accompany* one another.

When you damage your neighbour’s lawnmower, you *stand up* like a man, open your *mouth*, and give the guy *money* to *compensate* him for the damage.
1278 誉誉 reputation, fame

BF Prosperity and proper speech augment a person’s reputation.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1676]

1279 欺欺 deceive, cheat

BF I made them believe that they owed me money, but it was a fraud—I cheated them.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1699]

1280 粒粒 grain, granule, pellet

BF Someone threw rice on the floor where I was standing in my bare feet. I could feel each and every grain—oh, the pain!

[11 STROKES  RANK 1714]

1281 峡峡 gorge, canyon

BF To early explorers, gorges and canyons were picturesque valleys nestled between mountains.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1727]

1282 粹粹 pure*, unmixed*

BF The prince (disguised as a soldier) went to the wedding. The guests threw filthy rice at him, but it all rolled off, because he was so pure.

[14 STROKES  RANK 1736]

1283 糖糖 sugar, sweets, carbs

In the collective Chinese memory, nothing was sweeter than life during the Tang dynasty. Chinese candy tends to be in separate pieces, sprinkled with rice flour to keep it from sticking together.

[16 STROKES  RANK 1746]

1284 弥弥 full, overflowing

BF When you hold your giant bow and stand in the doorway, you fill it to overflowing.

[8 STROKES  RANK 1785]
1285 彫 彫 feathers
CMP You can imagine these feathers in a wing, upswept to catch the wind. Feathers have other uses—dusting, writing, drawing—and can be suggestive of other growths on living creatures, such as hair and bristles, and maybe fingernails and shells.

1286 珍 珍 precious thing
BF In this and other characters, ‘man’ straddles ‘feathers’, perhaps to suggest to readers the concept of “human feathers.” Of course, people don’t grow feathers, so this must be a poetic expression of decorative things that grow from someone’s body. In all likelihood, this represents a head of hair, but not just anybody’s hair—rather, an impressive, Beethovenian or Einsteinian mop.

This character paints a picture of luxuriant hair on the head of a king. This was a precious thing to the citizens in those days.

1287 须 须 beard, must
What are those wispy, whiskery, feathery things adjacent to a man’s face? Why, his beard, of course!

1288 趁 趁 take advantage of
Here’s a man (the king, perhaps, from §1286) walking around and in danger of tripping over his long, luxuriant hair. The Royal Tonsorial Parlor is part of his stroll—he’d better take advantage of this opportunity to get a haircut.

1289 穆 穆 respectful, dignified
BF Here’s our special suit for this respectful and dignified occasion. Of course we use silk, tastefully accoutered with some feathers for decoration. Since the harvest is the source of our prosperity, we cram our pockets full of grain to throw in a celebratory manner at the end of the ceremony.
影 影  shadow, reflection  view, scene 1083  feathers 1285  yìng

BF We’re shooting a movie. There’s a typical urban view, and notice how high the sun is in the sky—the feathery shadows are clearly visible.

[15 STROKES  RANK 390]

彭 彭  surname of Peng  ten 6  bean 1168  feathers 1285  péng

This character simply represents a particular family name, and has no other meaning so far as I can tell. How can we fix it in our minds forever?

Beans are notorious for the gassiness they induce; the feathery vapor trails on the right suggest the gas tracks from ten bowls of beans. The cook’s plea: “Please eat our northern Garbanzos,” and those initials spell ‘peng’. The rising second tone suggests the buoyant properties of gas.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1501]

参 参  take part in, participate  private 750  big 330 (altered)  feathers 1285  cān

BF They’ll only let me take part in the gang if I show true dedication. I need to wear something that’s private and very meaningful to me, like the big bunch of pink feathers I dance around in when nobody’s watching.

[8 STROKES  RANK 507]

诊 诊  diagnose  speech r 615  man 311  feathers 1285  zhěn

BF My ideal doctor is a man whose hands on my body are like feathers. He speaks his diagnosis calmly and in measured tones, no matter how serious.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1401]

惨 慘  miserable, wretched  heart (skinny) 930  take part in, participate 1292  cǎn

It’s emotional to take part in so many office parties. It makes me miserable—celebrating other people’s promotions, but never my own.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1530]
1295 彦 彦 accomplished, talented

BF His talents make him stand out from the crowd, figuratively as if he were standing atop a cliff, the feathers indicative of the elegance of his accomplishments.

[9 STROKES  RANK 2559]

1296 颜 颜 color

BF Upon receiving compliments on his talents, his face flushed deeply with embarrassment, turning (it seemed) every color of the rainbow.

[15 STROKES  RANK 1545]

1297 牲 牲 contented cows

CMP Imagine a long line of contented cows all resting their heads on the rail of their pens. Here’s a snapshot of this bucolic scene—there’s only room to show one of these horned animals.

1298 昔 昔 former times, past

BF An aging bull ruminates on his past life. All day long, it was his sole job to ensure that the cows stayed contented.

[8 STROKES  RANK 2388]
1299 卜措 arrange   
arrayr 29  former times, past 1298 cuò
BF Things that have been neatly arranged some time ago somehow always get messed up, seemingly by themselves. We need to use our hands carefully to set them back in order. [11 STROKES RANK 1148]

1300 借借 borrow or lend   
arrayr 953  former times, past 1298 jìe
The man loaned me money some time past when I was in real need of it. Now he needs my repayment as someone else needs to borrow it. [10 STROKES RANK 984]

1301 惜惜 cherish, value highly   
heart (skinny) 930  former times, past 1298 xī
BF People cherish things and other people who have been with them a long time. In this way, an emotion tied to something well-known from former times arises. [11 STROKES RANK 1512]

1302 共共 together   
contented cows 1297  eight 1048 gòng
There’s an abundance of cows contentedly resting in their barn. Domestic animals somehow learn to act together. [6 STROKES RANK 330]

1303 供供 supply, feed   
arrayr 953  together 1302 gōng
For effective deployment of a large group of men acting together (think of an army), you need to supply and feed these hungry guys. Remember, an army travels on its stomach! [8 STROKES RANK 550]
1304 洪        vast, grand (water)  |  hóng  
 BF When several great rivers or other flowing bodies of water come together, the result is a vast, flood-like expanse.  
 [9 STROKES  RANK 1350]

1305 黄        yellow  |  huáng  
 It’s harvest time, and the farmer reviews his status. The cows are contented, the fields have produced an abundance, and all is right with the world. While green is the prominent color in the spring and summer, now is the time when yellows and browns hold sway.  
 [11 STROKES  RANK 561]

1306 横        horizontal stroke  |  héng  
 A newly-cut tree looks yellow if the woodsman cuts it horizontally so you can see the bright inner material.  
 [15 STROKES  RANK 1330]

1307 謹        careful, cautious  |  jǐn  
 Chinese people behaved carefully and cautiously during the Cultural Revolution. The result of one wrong or misunderstood speech, and they would have to hide (different word, but the same sound as in ‘animal hide’) in the earth to escape the fury of the Red Guards!  
 [13 STROKES  RANK 1917]

1308 典        canon, dictionary  |  diǎn  
 BF Masses of words bound together within the ‘borders’ of a single book constitute a dictionary.  
 [8 STROKES  RANK 1044]

1309 恭        respectful  |  gōng  
 BF Here are several scholars together for the first time. Despite their eminence, they show as much respect to the least of them (who’s very funny-looking) as to the mightiest.  
 [10 STROKES  RANK 1742]
巷

lane, alley

This old-fashioned alley is so narrow that we can’t pass through it together. If we do, there’s only room for a single ear—the other gets scraped off on the walls of the buildings.

港

harbor, port

A harbor is the water equivalent of a lane, for it leads vessels to the city in an orderly manner.

暴

sudden and violent, savage

“Nature red in tooth and claw...,” quoth the poet. So it is appropriate for aspects of nature—sun and water—act together to illustrate the sudden violence of which nature is capable.

爆

explode, burst, quick-fry

Fire and sudden violence—the very definition of an explosion.

赛

compete, game, competition

Competitions like the Olympic Games are meant to transcend political differences. All teams gather together under one roof to compete. The fact that ‘together’ is altered reminds us that the contestants who participate might not normally be found together in the same room! The nature of the game is such that while the prize for winning might be money, it just as well might be something symbolic, like a seashell.
塞
塞
fill, stuff in
- roof 247
- together 1302 (altered)
- earth, soil 9

Let’s work together to throw soil into this large abandoned house. Thereby, we fill the house up so it can serve as a barricade to the enemy.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1080]

寒
寒
cold, glacial
- roof 247
- together 1302 (altered)
- ice r 569 (altered)

BF It’s so cold outside, that even as we huddle together under the roof, ice coatings have formed all around us.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1297]

戴
戴
wear, put on (clothes)
- halberd 359 (altered)
- ten 6
- field 57
- together 1302

This character forms a schematic for what the well-dressed soldier would have worn in ancient, scribal times. The left shows us the clothing part of the costume—tall helmet at the top resembles ‘ten’, and the tight tunic and smart trousers reminded someone of ‘field’ and ‘together’. An out-sized sword on the right completes the sketch.

[17 STROKES  RANK 1228]

翼
翼
wing, flank
- feather, wing 123
- field 57
- together 1302

BF All of a sudden, feathers started raining down on the big cornfield across the street. The feathers are huge and stay together in a big pile. They must come from the wing of a huge bird!

[17 STROKES  RANK 1294]

腊
腊
sausage
- meat 317 (altered)
- former times, past 1298

BF Remember the boar we butchered some time ago? We took the meat and made delicious sausages from it.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1497]
1320 籍 籍 books, works

BF Ever see pictures of ‘books’ from ancient China? They were made of bamboo strips cut from the tips of the plant, and sewn together.

[20 STROKES RANK 1579]

1321 猎 猎 hunt, chase

BF In times past, there was great reliance on dogs to help conclude a successful hunt.

[11 STROKES RANK 1687]

1322 釆 釆 distinguish, differentiate

CMP Despite the visual decomposition you see here, the origin of this character is as a claw mark. In former times, it was important—crucial!—to be able to differentiate between the various animals of the forest on the basis of traces they left behind. In this case, the strokes going every which way must have suggested the stylized print of a claw.

1323 番 番 kind

Fields contain many kinds of crops, each needing different care. As a result, it’s important to distinguish between the kinds of crops in the various fields.

[12 STROKES RANK 1452]

1324 播 播 sow, broadcast

I use my hand to throw the different kinds of seed into a field, which is exactly what sowing is.

[15 STROKES RANK 1275]
Unit 55
Power of Suggestion

1325 悉悉  know, learn  distinguish, differentiate  heart (fat)  xī
BF The most basic type of learning involves distinguishing between different emotions—know thyself!

1326 翻翻  turn over, cross over  distinguish, differentiate  field  feather, wing  fān
After all these years as a farmer, I still can’t differentiate between a well-plowed field and a marsh land covered with feathery grass. As a result, it’s hard for me cross over to the other side.

1327 钻  gold r  CMP This is just a squished-up form of ‘gold’ ($1157$).

1328 锦锦  brocade  gold r  silk  jǐn
BF Brocade is a luxurious fabric made of silk shot with gold or other shiny metallic thread.

1329 锐锐  sharp, acute  gold r  exchange, convert  rúi
BF The sharp businessperson is the one who can profitably convert his goods into gold.

1330 销销  melt metal  gold r  like, similar to  xiāo
If you put all different pieces of gold into the kiln, they all become similar shapeless lumps after the metal melts.
1331 钱 钱 money, coins

Gold becomes convenient when you chop it up into many tiny but standardized units. These bits, like coins, become useful as money.

[10 STROKES RANK 603]

1332 错 错 bad, wrong, mistaken

In former times this country’s money was made out of precious metal, but now our coinage is debased and bad.

[13 STROKES RANK 638]

1333 铁 铁 iron

The gold bars somehow became spoiled, as if they were living things. Gradually, they lost their color—and their value. Now, they’re just iron ingots.

[10 STROKES RANK 779]

1334 钟 钟 bell, clock, time

The metal item that was of central importance in ancient China was the bell, located in the middle of the town square. It marked time, tolled for important events, and represented authority and prosperity.

[9 STROKES RANK 905]

1335 镇 镇 trading center, garrison post

That trading post is so tiny it looks fake, but don’t be fooled—it’s real! The soldiers take their job of guarding the gold very seriously.

[15 STROKES RANK 1002]

1336 针 针 needle, pin, injection

The ‘gold’ here really stands for any fine metal, and the ‘ten’ refers—more or less—to its shape. Also, in the old days, you needed one gold coin to buy ten needles—that’s how costly they were to manufacture.

[7 STROKES RANK 1116]
1337 镜 鏡  mirror
BF The myth of the pot of gold at the end of the rainbow endures as a mirror of a universal desire for easy money.
[16 STROKES RANK 1251]

1338 钻 鑽  drill, bore
Prospecting—drilling for gold—is a little like practicing divination. You hope for the best, but you never know what you’ll find.
[10 STROKES RANK 1724]

1339 銅 銅  copper
Many metals—especially when newly minted and untouched by tarnish—are so bright and shiny as to appear similar to gold. Copper is prominent among this group.
[11 STROKES RANK 1772]

1340 小 小  small (v)
1 In the same way that ‘eight’ and other components have two variants, so too does ‘small’ (§1063).
2 However, here’s another interpretation that’s also useful. The two ticks on the end signify abundance, and the vertical in the middle splits or divides this abundance. Sometimes we can interpret this component as meaning ‘potential’, a potential for abundance. At other times, this represents the destruction or diminution of something plentiful.

1341 当 当  work as, become
You use this verb in the sense of becoming as in ‘I want to become (to work as) an astronaut’. This character shows a seed just sprouting out of the layered ground, another way to interpret the boar’s head. Tentatively, it spreads out a few small leaves, to mark the transition as it becomes a plant from a seed. The tiny leaves symbolize the potential abilities of the young plant.
[6 STROKES RANK 71]
ward off, block

A hand approaches our sprouting seed. Some vicious child likes uprooting these seedlings for the fun of it! He will block its becoming a real plant, and so destroy its potential.

lock up, lock

The sound of engaging a lock is similar to that of a bunch of small shells jingling together. Of course, the lock itself is made of metal.

files, archives

BF I feel like I have become a tree, because I pile up files all day long, creating stacks of paper which become as hard and unyielding a the trees they once were.

hands raised high

CMP We only see three upraised arms, but the topmost curve, almost horizontal, suggests the presence of hands, and many more arms, in the background.

shake, wave

Here are a group of heroes stranded on a desert-dry mountain. Everybody waves all their hands (all of which are raised high) vigorously in the attention to attract attention.

appropriate, proper

The cowering woman in front is comforted by the raised hands of her loved ones that all is secure and proper.
1348 采 采  pick, gather  
The best fruit sits high on the *tree*. *Hold your hands high* in order to *pick* those succulent plums.

1349 菜 菜  dish, course, veggies  
*Vegetables* are personally *gathered* by great chefs for their mouthwatering *dishes*.

1350 彩 彩  colorful  
The main reason to *gather feathers* is because they are so bright and *colorful*.
The crucial meeting takes place in this cozy house. They vote on the motion. Everybody raises their hands. The motion carries—it’s unanimous!

Although a low frequency character in its standalone incarnation, it appears as a component in other characters.

We formed a search party so we would go all together to the hills. It’s too dangerous to go by yourself.

The members raise their hands to affirm an extensive list of motions, a list of all the things we ought to do.

A saber is a kind of knife. What kind? Well, when the intellectuals in the party raise their hands to vote on something, the warlord makes one mighty swing of his saber and chops off all their hands!

Infestations of trees by insects are increasingly common. If you group the trees together, then they are much easier to examine.
1356 验验 examine, check 马 878 一起，一致 1351 马
In the old days, the days of the Wild American West, buying a horse was a serious craft. Until you build up skill, you need to get all your friends together to help you examine the horse you’re thinking of buying.

[10 STROKES RANK 534]

1357 签签 sign one’s name 竹 243 一起，一致 1351 签
In ancient times, people only signed their name at special occasions. Most often, it signaled unanimous agreement. Pens for signing were made out of bamboo.

[13 STROKES RANK 1254]

1358 弋弋 mighty tree CMP You know this is a mighty tree, a conifer, because of the Christmas-tree profile and the three levels of branches, each loaded with pine needles.

1359 春春 spring (season) 木 mighty tree 1358 日, sun 63 春
Imagine this Kodak moment. The mighty tree dominates the foreground, showing off its new foliage. They are lit up by the rays of the sun, which is still low in the sky to indicate the moderate weather of spring.

[9 STROKES RANK 921]

1360 奏奏 memorialize the emperor 木 mighty tree 1358 天 333 奏
It’s from the ramparts of the extraordinary monument to the emperor (think: pyramids, Sphinx) that we see the mighty tree as symbol of homage to the son of heaven.

[9 STROKES RANK 1543]

1361 秦秦 Qin (dynasty) 木 mighty tree 1358 稻谷 409 秦
It is thought that the Qin dynasty gave its name to the word ‘China’.

The Qin first brought modernity to Chinese civilization—more than two millennia ago. A centralized government made possible a countrywide program of public works, symbolized by this mighty tree, and helped guarantee supplies of food and grain to all citizens throughout the country.

[10 STROKES RANK 1394]
Everyone had to assemble, even on this icy day, to memorialize the emperor.

The solemnity and majesty of the moment are emphasized by holding the ceremony outside, beneath our mighty tree. The king presents the ceremonial sword to the patriot.

The mighty tree is in danger of toppling over—lightning has destroyed the right support system of its great trunk. Wise forest rangers merely need to insert a one-inch slab of wood to preserve the supports, and to safeguard the longevity of the tree.

It's messy as we make the year's first batch of egg rolls; the dabs up on top emphasize this mess. The kitchen is still dark—it's only very early spring—so the 'sun' between the curved supports is gone. We roll the wrapper in the shape of the spiral folds of a person's ear.

The pigs are in their pen, quietly waiting for dinner. Tonight it's their favorite—slightly stale egg rolls—that get tossed into the enclosure.

What could be more peaceful than a quiet spot in the country, the sound of wind whistling through mighty trees while water gurgles and splashes in a nearby brook.
1368 筹 筹 tally, counter  
Bamboo plant have such longevity that you can use them as tallies of the passage of historical events (new governments, the occurrence of eclipses and earthquakes, and so on).  
[13 STROKES  RANK 1677]

1369 → → time’s arrow  
This right-pointing arrow is a bit stylized, because the upper part of the arrow point is only sketched in.

1370 今 今 today, current  
The flow of time is often likened to the flight of time’s arrow, flying from the left (the past) to the right (the future). Here, the legs of a man attempt to pinion time’s flight right now, today.  
[4 STROKES  RANK 336]

1371 贪 贪 corrupt, venal  
The only way the government worker gets the wealth that he craves today is if he is thoroughly corrupt.  
[8 STROKES  RANK 1874]

1372 念 念 read aloud  
When a skilled reader reads aloud, she conveys her current emotion.  
[8 STROKES  RANK 477]

1373 令 令 season  
A little bit of today—that is, today, plus the few weeks before and after—comprise a season.  
[5 STROKES  RANK 378]

1374 玲 玲 exquisitely made  
The exquisitely made jewelry in view on noble ears, fingers, and limbs announces the beginning of the social season—when the king and other royals begin the round of fancy balls and such.  
[9 STROKES  RANK 1855]
1375 零 零  zero
During the rainy season, there’s absolutely nothing to do, except wait for better weather.  
[13 STROKES  RANK 1342]

1376 齡 齡  age, years
BF Imagine we’re in the middle of tooth season, the time when teeth fall out of our mouths like rain from the heavens. This is a problem for older people (at least it used to be, in times of poor public health) after the passage of many years.  
[13 STROKES  RANK 1510]
Unit 57
Whatever You Say

1377 領 領 neck
BF The neck is a seasonal body part on top of a person. That is, sometimes you see it (warmer weather), and sometimes you don’t (cooler times).
[11 STROKES RANK 329]

1378 冷 冷 cold
When it’s the ‘ice’ season, it’s sure to be bitter cold.
[7 STROKES RANK 700]

1379 怜 怜 sympathy, pity
BF Heart season is the time of year when you display sympathy and pity for your fellow man. Hopefully, this ‘heart season’ runs all year long.
[8 STROKES RANK 1599]

1380 吟 吟 chant, recite
Today’s sounds always sound fresh and new. In a few years, they are as outdated as religious chanting.
[7 STROKES RANK 2015]

1381 含 含 keep in the mouth
You keep in your mouth what’s currently in your mouth.
[7 STROKES RANK 937]

It’s easy to confuse 吟 and 含 (§§1380 and 1381). But 吟 ‘chant, recite’ refers to actual production of sound, and the sound travels further with the mouth part 口 on the side. With the mouth aimed down, as in 含, no one would hear anything.
**UNIT 57, §§1382–1387 WHATEVER YOU SAY**

1382 琴 琴 zither-like instrument

Zithers are folk-instruments with many rows of strings and frets, which the *two kings* resemble. Think of the bottom component as a pick (like a guitar pick) to pluck the strings to make music. [12 STROKES  RANK 1701]

1383 鈴 鈴 bell

Bells constructed out of *fine metal* are *seasonal* items that hang outside to make beautiful music when soft breezes blow. [10 STROKES  RANK 1969]

1384 隣 隣 neighbor, neighborhood, neighboring

BF In ancient times, rich folk wandered from country to *town*, and back, depending on the *season*. In *season*, you could depend on having a *neighbor* in *town*, otherwise the city house was a lonely place indeed. [7 STROKES  RANK 1659]

Small, diagonal strokes are common.

1385 石 石 stone r

CMP The level surface with the sloping downward edge represents the profile of a *stone* cliff.

1386 石 石 stone, rock

BF The things at the bottoms of cliffs tend to be monstrous *stones* and boulders. The ‘mouth’ component is a big *rock*, not a mouth. [5 STROKES  RANK 414]

1387 碧 碧 green jade

BF We saw in §207 that we could think of an *emperor* as a ‘white king’, with these elements stacked vertically. Here, to accommodate a crowded character square, these components are juxtaposed to each other horizontally.

What kind of *stone* would appeal to the *emperor*? Why, *green jade*, of course—China’s royal gem. [14 STROKES  RANK 2165]
1388 岩 岩  
cliff, crag  
mountain: 21  stone, rock: 1386  
yán

BF The salient quality of a cliff is the abrupt and sudden contrast between the high ground on one side of the cliff and the low ground on the other. This character emphasizes the contrast in terrain—the high mountain on top next to the big rock resting on the ground below.  
[8 STROKES  RANK 1423]

1389 碰 碰  
touch, bump  
stone, rock: 1386  enter, advance: 1123 (altered)  eight (v): 1047  
pèng
The ‘enter’ component on the right is missing the ‘sun’ that belongs at the bottom. The stone rolled into the cave, and destroyed the sunlamp when it bumped into it! The ‘abundant’ dabs up top represent pieces of debris flying all over the place.  
[13 STROKES  RANK 1371]

1390 碎 碎  
broken  
stone, rock: 1386  foot soldier: 450  
suí
The force of the bomb blast dropped a stone on the soldier. Only his helmet was broken.  
[13 STROKES  RANK 1420]

1391 碍 碍  
hinder, obstruct  
stone, rock: 1386  day, sun: 63  one: 2  inch: 210  
ài
We’re trapped in the mine! Peering up, we can only see one inch of the sun over the horizon. By its light, we see the huge stone that hinders our escape.  
[13 STROKES  RANK 1437]

1392 矿 矿  
ore  
stone, rock: 1386  extensive: 686  
kuàng
Extensive supplies of an important kind of mineral or stone is what ore is.  
[8 STROKES  RANK 1385]

1393 碗 碗  
bowl  
stone, rock: 1386  bent: 864  
wǎn
Waterproof things were few and far between in ancient times. That’s why a peculiar bend in a small rock would have been so valuable—it would have served as a leak proof bowl.  
[13 STROKES  RANK 1939]
1394 碌 碌 base*, foundation*  石石 r 1385 石石 exit 22 chū

BF The component that means ‘exit’ has a structural appearance—it looks like it could hold stuff. Perhaps it does, and it holds large amounts of stone, which act as a strong and solid base or foundation to this building.

[10 STROKES RANK 1014]

1395 磨 磨 polish, wear down, pester

石石 hemp, pocked, pitted 694 (altered) 石石 stone, rock 1386 mó

Go ahead, wrap some linen cloth around a hefty stone. You’ll find it makes a great polishing tool. With patience, it wears down the roughest blemish. It reminds me of the way my kids pester when they want something—they simply wear me down.

[16 STROKES RANK 1537]

1396 碑 碑 number  石石 stone, rock 1386 马马 horse 878 mà

Stones got lodged in the horse’s hoof. We counted every step back to town.

[8 STROKES RANK 1345]

1397 磁 磁 porcelain  石石 stone, rock 1386 今今 now, at present 779 cí

BF At present, no one eats out of hollowed stones. Everything is now porcelain or china!

[14 STROKES RANK 1771]

1398 了 了 le r

CMP 了 is the supreme example of an important Chinese word which defies easy translation. By great good fortune, it’s so common that you’ll soon learn how to recognize and draw it.

1399 了 了 le  烈 le r 1398 le

One of the important uses of this common word is to signal a sudden ‘change of state’ (refer to your favorite textbook for a more leisurely and meaningful discussion), suggested by the twists and turns of this squiggly character. We’ll use it to signify a sudden, significant change.

[2 STROKES RANK 5]
1400 亨 亨 smooth
cover 268  mouth 41  le 1399  hēng
A roof (cover) over your head, food to keep your mouth happy, and changes for the better mean life is finally becoming smooth for you.

[7 STROKES  RANK 2146]

1401 哼 哼 hum, croon
mouth 41  smooth 1400  hēng
The sound from your mouth when things are going smoothly is apt to be a humming or crooning.

[10 STROKES  RANK 1966]

1402 子 子 son, child
le 1399  one 2  zǐ
BF There is no change in life so sudden as the birth of one child.

[3 STROKES  RANK 37]
Unit 58
Big Doings

1403 享 享 enjoy
When one thing after another goes smoothly, then I sit back and enjoy life.
[8 STROKES  RANK 1227]

Here again is the case of two characters, those in §§1400 and 1403, that can be confused. Both ‘smooth’ and ‘enjoyable’ are adjectives that apply to life, but ‘enjoyable’ conveys a little bit more than just ‘smooth’. The character 享 ‘enjoy’ contains one more stroke than 亨 ‘smooth’.

1404 仔 仔 animal young
A man takes his son to the zoo, where their favorite exhibits feature the animal young.
[5 STROKES  RANK 1572]

1405 好 好 good, OK
No scene better suggests a sense of goodness than a woman together with her child.
[6 STROKES  RANK 82]

1406 李 李 plum
The ancient Chinese considered plums to be the most important of fruits. As a result, the offspring of orchard trees were often plums.
[7 STROKES  RANK 472]
1407 季 季  season*
 BF At the start of one season, the grain, which is the offspring of last year’s crop, is still unripe. But by season’s end, it has ripened and matured.
 [8 STROKES  RANK 1279]

These two glyphs—李 ‘plum’ and 季, §§1406 and 1407—have meanings that can get jumbled. The little ‘dab’ atop 季 suggests immaturity, and you need an entire season for the crop to fully ripen.

1408 俘 俘  capture, take prisoner
 BF Young soldiers—so young they seem like children—have raised their hands in surrender to the man who has captured them.  [9 STROKES  RANK 2057]

1409 浮 浮  float
 BF The small child has fallen into the water. General panic! All the other swimmers gather round, hands held high, to keep him out of harm’s way. But not to worry—children naturally float in water.  [10 STROKES  RANK 1462]

1410 孙 孙  grandson
 BF A grandson is like a son, but the filial relationship has been diluted—made small—by the intervening generation.  [6 STROKES  RANK 995]

1411 孟 孟  eldest among brothers
 BF Which child sits at the head of the table by the dishes of food? The eldest among them, by virtue of his status and superior strength and growth.  [8 STROKES  RANK 1575]

1412 孔 孔  hole, aperture
 BF Holes in the ground that mark old mineshafts are quite dangerous, especially for puppies and children. This character also stands for Confucius.  [4 STROKES  RANK 1289]
1413 孤 孤 solitary, isolated .Bounds [son, child 1402]melon 781 gū
BF The boy is gorging himself on a melon, and he is making such a sloppy pig of himself that no one sits near him. He has become solitary and isolated.
[8 STROKES RANK 1334]

1414 郭 郭 outer city wall .Bounds [high 275 (altered)] [son, child 1402]town 745 guō
BF The town protects its children and other vulnerable people by means of something high—the massive outer city wall.
[10 STROKES RANK 1813]

1415 字 字 character, word .Bounds [roof 247] [son, child 1402]zì
You want a character—I’ll give you a character. It’s my son. At age forty-two, he still lives under my roof! (And when is he going to get married?)
[6 STROKES RANK 393]

1416 疑 疑 doubt, suspect .Bounds [ancient ladle 142] [arrow 334] [son, child 1402 (altered)] [stop! 181 (altered)] yí
BF Using a ladle as an arrow, his son seriously expects that he will be able to stop danger. I suspect he’s a little bit nuts.
[14 STROKES RANK 698]

1417 疗 疗 cure, treat illness .Bounds [sick 697] [le 1399] liáo
BF One of the functions of the ‘le’ character is to signal a change of state. Thus, if someone starts out sick, and then there is a change in the state of their health, they must be cured!
[7 STROKES RANK 949]

1418 猛 猛 fierce, valiant .Bounds [dog r 898] [eldest among brothers 1411] měng
In a litter of puppies, the eldest among these dogs has been observed to secure his position by fierce behavior towards his siblings.
[11 STROKES RANK 1157]
1419 厚 

thick, deep, profound

The college freshman stands on top of the cliff, pondering how different words like ‘son’ and ‘sun’ sound alike yet have different meanings. How profound, or so he thinks.

1420 凝

congeal, curdle

Early on, I began to doubt you still loved me. When you poured ice cubes down my back at the party, my suspicions congealed into knowledge.

1421 ✈️ ✈️ action path

The presence of this element suggests a path along which something important happened. Sometimes, it suggests just the action itself.

1422 么 么 huh? what?

A fly or worm or something is tracing an action path along my neighbor’s nose. What the heck is it?

1423 长

long, length

The scepter is the back wall of a room, and the horizontal represents a long mirror bisecting it. A ray of light from the mirror travels to the upper right. The lower half of this vision is a mirror image of the upper half. It’s well known that a mirror in a room increases the apparent length of the room.

1424 勿

do not

There’s a lot of activity going on, and it is all not permitted. Everything is restricted to the place of refuge in order to circumscribe the activity.
The boar is one animal you do not want to take for granted. They have foul tempers; they can be vicious, and their temperament can turn on a dime. Those gaping jaws help emphasize this warning!

Most of the people who live in my home under my roof are such pigs!

My son (sounds like ‘sun’) does not do anything all day long! Life is easy for him.

Imagine an immigrant speaking, someone whose English is not quite up to snuff. “Nothing’s the matter—do not ox me again!” Many foreigners pronounce ‘ask’ like ‘ox’.
Unit 59

Not So Fast!

1429 东 东  east  show, indicate  1064 (altered)  action path  1421  dòng
As the sun ascends in the **east**, its rays *indicate* the **action path** that it traces in the sky. [5 STROKES  RANK 194]

1430 车 车  car  east  1429 (altered)  ten  6  chē
In the old days, how would you have gone from California to New York? You climb in your **car**, and head **east**. In **ten** days, more or less, you’ll be bucking crowds in Times Square.

Also:  车 shows the outline of the front of your new, fire-engine red Lexus, seen from above. The car’s hood is on the left. The horizontals represent the wheels on the right and left. The front right door is open, and if you look inside, you’ll see the front row of bucket seats (that’s the vertical line) neatly bisected in two. [4 STROKES  RANK 361]

1431 军 军  military  smooth cover  280  car  1430  jūn
**BF** Put a strong, weapons-resistant **cover** on a **car**, and you’ve converted it to **military** use. [6 STROKES  RANK 102]

1432 辉 辉  brightness, splendor  light, ray  1116  military  1431  huī
**BF** In the old days, before ‘imperialism’ became a dirty word, one presumed that the metaphorical *light* from **military** exploits brought **brightness** and **splendor** to the reigning monarch. [12 STROKES  RANK 1623]
Military vehicles are big and heavy. After a rainstorm, this heaviness churns up a lot of earth, which mixes with rain water to create dismal, muddy conditions.

It’s the heat of battle. With your hand, you seize a military flag, brandish it in the face of the enemy, and lead your troops to victory.

BF I remember those horrible years BDL—before driving license. Not having a car at my disposal made every day seem a lifetime!

That squished car on the left is so small it only fits two people. It must be a sports car, a classic Corvette—the standard by which all such cars are measured.

Talk about gruesome! One the car’s wheels came off during highway driving. The car became unbalanced, and in a freak accident, the driver was beheaded.

The rat’s body lay in the water with only the head exposed. Due to the action of bacteria in the water, the flesh was rapidly decomposing. Gradually, these natural causes resulted in the separation of the head from the body—a sort of natural beheading.
1439 暂 暂 temporarily  behead 1437  day, sun 63  zàn
Our ancient forebears always created gods to represent natural phenomena. In those times, if ‘day’ was thought of as a handsome god, then night would have seemed like a beheading of this god. Fortunately, this was only temporary—day always returned the next morning.  [12 STROKES  RANK 1325]

1440 辑 辑 compile, edit  car 1430  mouth 41  ear 82  jí
BF The author travels in his car all over, conducting interviews to get material for his next blockbuster. For the sake of efficiency, he works on his material while driving, talking to himself (that’s why the mouth is so close to the ear) to edit and compile this material while on the road.  [13 STROKES  RANK 1362]

1441 轻 轻 light, agile  car 1430  man 311 (altered)  labor, work 7  qīng
The small horizontal tick on top of ‘man’ is an example of comic-book art—it represents swiftness and speed. Some man in his car is able to finish his work with seeming agility because the work was so light.  [9 STROKES  RANK 460]

1442 必 必 must  heart 907  action path 1421  bì
A heart’s action is something that must happen—otherwise you die.  [5 STROKES  RANK 248]

1443 秘 秘 secret  rice or grain 409  must 1442  mì
BF Something that must be done is a requirement. The government requisitions large amounts of grain, but keeps the amount secret, so the enemy won’t know the scale of preparation.  [10 STROKES  RANK 896]

1444 瑟 瑟 rustling sound  king (times 2) 11  must 1442  sè
It’s a solemn moment as a pair of kings from neighboring states gather to sign a treaty. It must be signed! No one dares make noise to interrupt the proceedings—only the rustling sounds of the rulers’ robes can be heard.  [13 STROKES  RANK 1694]
1445 乍 乍 suddenly

Here’s a brief example of an unexpected and sudden change of motion. Here you are, climbing a ladder when you suddenly slip and fall down. The action path shows the trajectory of your descent.

[5 STROKES  RANK 2914]

1446 作 作 to do, make

A man climbing up and down a ladder is bringing supplies up to the roof to do repairs.

[7 STROKES  RANK 49]

1447 昨 昨 yesterday

BF You’re having such a good time with old college friends you haven’t seen in twenty years that you hardly notice the passage of time. The sun has long since gone down, and this great day is suddenly just another yesterday.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1475]

1448 炸 炸 explode, burst

What is especially dangerous when you are playing with fire? Something can suddenly happen, like an explosion that you never expect.

[9 STROKES  RANK 976]

1449 怎 怎 how, why

BF The ‘suddenly’ part looks like a ladder. Imagine a perky heart attempting to fix the roof. Suddenly, the ladder breaks and falls on the heart, quashing it flat. The broken ladder looks like a ‘Y’ (sounds like why).

[9 STROKES  RANK 382]

1450 弟 弟 younger brother

BF In ancient hunter societies, younger brothers had to prove themselves by accomplishing a successful action, such as using their bow to capture someone else’s sheep.

[7 STROKES  RANK 816]
第 第 ordinal prefix

In hierarchical societies, it’s important to list younger brothers in order. In those days, people died often and unexpectedly, so an orderly bequeathing of family assets was crucial. If you’ve ever stared at a length of bamboo for any amount of time, you’ll appreciate the connection. These stalks are divided quite clearly into orderly and regular sections. [11 STROKES RANK 114]

不 不 no!

Here’s one way to make sure an action will not go to completion—make sure it stays underground, or otherwise under the radar.

It also looks like an upside-down wineglass, complete with upside-down stirrer. This is definitely not the way to get drunk! [4 STROKES RANK 4]

杯 杯 cup

BF The crafts person has used wood to create this upside-down cup. Cups made from wood should not be made this way! [8 STROKES RANK 1396]

坏 坏 spoiled, bad

In ancient days, people thought that vapors emanating from the earth had a bad and harmful effect, rendering everything that was too close to the soil not good. [7 STROKES RANK 832]
Unit 60
Slow Down and Smell the Flowers

1455 环 circled  
\(\text{king} 11\)  \(\text{no! } 1452\)  \(\text{huán}\)

The king takes his cup, which we know (sounds like ‘no’) got overturned on the table, and supports it by encircling it with his hands.

It’s easy to mistake the two characters in §§1454, 1455 for each other—坏 versus 环. If you’ve ever bought food and stored it for later use, you know that you have to keep it off the ground, for ground contact promotes spoilage. In olden times, the circle was considered to be the most perfect of geometric forms, so much so that it sometimes received holy or royal status, so it’s easy therefore to associate ‘king’ with ‘encircling’.

1456 否 no  
\(\text{no! } 1452\)  \(\text{mouth } 41\)  \(\text{fǒu}\)

When you use your mouth to say no, you are negating an opinion.

1457 怀 state of mind  
\(\text{heart (skinny) } 930\)  \(\text{no! } 1452\)  \(\text{huái}\)

‘Heart’ is a visual synonym for ‘emotion’, and here it’s next to an overturned cup. The cup restrains emotion and sets the stage for a sober state of mind.

1458 在 located at  
\(\text{one } 2\)  \(\text{scepter } 5\)  \(\text{earth, soil } 9\)  \(\text{action path } 1421\)  \(\text{zài}\)

The ‘one’ and ‘scepter’ mark out a location in the earth which you get to by following the path of action.
1459 存 存 store, preserve

Observe the action path of a car, starting from a fixed structure and terminated by one scepter-like obstacle, resulting in the death of the young driver. The three strokes seem to cradle and preserve the image of the child, much as the bereaved parents will store the precious memories of their son.

[6 STROKES RANK 384]

1460 者 者 -er

(This cryptic definition refers to certain verbs which comes directly in front of it. ‘-er’ is the same thing as ‘one who...’.) You need to apply action to bring something from under the earth—a metaphor for unformed and chaotic—to the light of day—a metaphor for a fully finished activity. This is the job of someone who performs an activity, a perform-er.

[8 STROKES RANK 103]

1461 都 都 all

All kinds of people able to do all kinds of things can always be found in large towns and cities.

[10 STROKES RANK 68]

1462 著 著 write, compose

Paper was one of the great discoveries of ancient China, developed long before its production began in the West. Made from grass and other vegetable matter, the components in 著 refer to an active process which uses this vegetable matter invention, namely writing on paper.

[11 STROKES RANK 777]

1463 署 署 government office

Despite his most conscientious efforts, the civil servant in his government office finds all his actions trap him in an entangling net of bureaucratic red tape.

[13 STROKES RANK 1379]

1464 赌 赌 bet, gamble

Some scribe once thought that wealth fosters one major activity—gambling. Is this evidence of ancient Chinese cynicism?

[12 STROKES RANK 2037]
Filial responsibility is the duty of a child who helps ensure that order and security is transformed out of earthly chaos by means of uplifting actions.

My eyes are very sensitive to sunlight. In this character, a hand shades my eyes so I’ll better be able to see into the distance (stage right). The additional horizontals represent my hair flapping in the breeze, and the curve shows the action path of my arm.

Top of the ninth, tie score—a fly ball is headed out of the park; we see the path it takes. It looks like another win for the Yankees. But wait—something surprising just happened! The rookie outfielder sticks his hand up, catches the fly, and the batter is out! It’s anybody’s ballgame as we head into overtime.

Remember, the surrounding enclosure is really round—it just looks square because writing brushes don’t do well with actual circles! To me, the ‘action path’ (§1421) of the 才 part makes this component so vivid that I see an active man inside the enclosure grappling with its round shape, maybe trying roll it down the street, like a young child in a tire.
1469 闭 闭 闭 shut*, close*  ■ door 196  ■ indicates sth just happened 1467 bi
Ow—the door just shut on my toe! That’s me in the middle, dancing in pain.
Keep the distinction between the two lookalikes 团 and this one, 闭. The first means circle, which the outer enclosure clearly suggests. The ‘door’ component occurring in this character is an old friend by now.
[6 STROKES  RANK 1267]

1470 财 财 财 wealth, riches  ■ cowrie 430  ■ indicates sth just happened 1467 cài
BF The heavy shell just fell on my head! I was in the hospital for weeks. The successful lawsuit made me rich.
[7 STROKES  RANK 680]

1471 材 材 材 timber  ■ tree 375  ■ indicates sth just happened 1467 cái
BF One minute, it’s a noble, living tree. The next minute, it fell and just missed this guy who is dancing in fright. In the blink of an eye, a majestic tree has become just another piece of timber.
[7 STROKES  RANK 952]

1472 牙 牙 牙 tooth*  ■ indicates sth just happened 1467 (altered)  ■ one 2 yá
The ‘action path’ (§1421) shows here the inner surface of one sharp canine tooth pointing up; the hooked vertical forms the outer surface of the tooth, and the hook is the root of the tooth anchored in the animal’s jaw (not drawn). The point of the tooth has just penetrated the juicy slab of meat, the layer drawn at the top.
[4 STROKES  RANK 997]

1473 呀 呀 呀 ah!, oh!  ■ mouth 41  ■ tooth* 1472 yá
That’s your flesh that the canine tooth is embedded in. Out of your mouth comes expletives like oh and ah, among others less printable.
[7 STROKES  RANK 929]

1474 雅 雅 雅 elegant  ■ tooth* 1472  ■ short-tailed bird 992 yá
Imagine strutting your stuff with an elegant necklace made from the teeth of birds.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1139]
1475 少 少 few, little  The character 小 (§1063) refers to relative size, whereas this current character 少 refers to relative numbers of things. It's easy to keep straight—we use tools to perform an activity, and tools are counted rather than measured.  [4 STROKES  RANK 233]

1476 吵 吵 quarrel, make noise  We quarrel using our mouth, and if we're any good at it, we end up with few close friends.  [7 STROKES  RANK 2040]

1477 妙 妙 wonderful  In contrast to ancient thinking, women have few natural disadvantages. This makes them wonderful!  [7 STROKES  RANK 1250]

1478 省 省 economize, be frugal  Spending only a few dollars is to be frugal. Turn economize into a verb by adding a couple of eyes, sounds like ‘-ize’, a verb suffix, and we've got it!  [9 STROKES  RANK 666]

1479 沙 沙 sand  Look in the water. See those little, granular particles? That's sand.  [7 STROKES  RANK 848]

1480 莎 莎 katydid  BF People who study insects consider katydids another name for “long-horned grasshopper,” and the grass radical up top looks a little horn-like. Common species in North America are quite small, almost like grains of living sand in a sea of grass.  [10 STROKES  RANK 2125]
Unit 61
Buy Now, Pay Later

1481 乒乓 ping-pong 乒乓 catty 118  one 2  action path 1421

One ping-pong table is unbalanced because its right pair of legs have been weakened. The table crashes to earth—on the right side—with a loud ping!
(You can remember that this 乒乓 has the sound ‘ping’ because both ‘ping’ and ‘right’ contain an ‘i.’)

[6 STROKES RANK 3447]

1482 乒乓 ping-pong* 乒乓 catty 118  one 2  action path 1421 (altered)

One ping-pong table is unbalanced because its left pair of legs have been weakened. The table crashes to earth with a loud pang!

If you put these two characters together in the correct way (butting them together), the supporting ‘action path’ strokes form a stable support. Do it in the wrong order and the support is plainly unstable.

[6 STROKES RANK 3502]

1483 乒乓 soldier 乒乓 ping-pong 1481 乒乓 ping-pong* 1482

Ever watch Chinese champions play ping-pong? They play with an unrivaled intensity. The two players approach each match as if they were soldiers on a critical campaign.

[7 STROKES RANK 398]

1484 久久 long time 久久 action path 1421  man 311 (altered)

This man is active. But because the extra little stroke gets in his path, it takes him a long time to get to his destination.

[3 STROKES RANK 637]
1485 落

slice, flake

- action path 1421 
- weight atop slices 
- place of refuge 111 (altered)

piàn

This character shows a Renaissance courtier in profile. Ramrod posture, one leg slightly behind him, while the other is bent at the knee. He holds a tray of flaky pastries, with a weight on top of the slices to keep them all from sliding off as he offers them to the visiting princess.

[4 STROKES RANK 455]

1486 卑

low, inferior

- white 201 
- action path 1421 
- ten 6

bēi

BF A brief action sequence: you’re using a white-tipped hammer to pound a spike (in the shape of the Chinese numeral ten) till it’s low in the ground.

[8 STROKES RANK 2059]

1487 牌

plate, tablet

- slice, flake 1485 
- low, inferior 1486

pái

BF A slice of metal placed close to the surface would look low if the surface were horizontal. It is a tablet inscribed with important information.

[12 STROKES RANK 1261]

1488 将

handle a matter

- slice, flake 1485 (altered) 
- evening, dusk 655 
- inch 210

jiāng

My spouse has never figured out how to barbecue meat, and it always comes out almost like charcoal! I handle the matter tactfully by slicing the meat, which is dark as night, into small, inch-like pieces which I force myself to swallow.

[9 STROKES RANK 132]

1489 刀

knife

- place of refuge 111 
- action path 1421

dāo

The place of refuge is disturbed by the action of the intruder. The brave hero used his knife to save us all.

This component expands the slim knife of §166, but it’s still the same knife.

[2 STROKES RANK 1067]

1490 分

divide, separate

- eight 1048 
- knife 1489

fēn

The ‘eight’ at the top used to be a whole man (§311) until someone sliced him open with a knife. Now he’s divided it into separate pieces.

[4 STROKES RANK 79]
1491 方 方  square, direction

1  This stylized plow emphasizes the importance of this tool to the ancient economy. The furrows precisely change direction and the resulting pattern of a square field impressed ancient scribes.
2  See how the action extends at the end and over the place of refuge? The cover provides a restraint to make sure that the direction of our motion stays within a particular square.

[f 4 STROKES RANK 60]

1492 力 力  strength

The handle of the knife has been altered to emphasize the strength you need to force the blade deep into the bowels of...Well, you fill in the rest.
Take care not confuse this character with 刀 in §1489.

[2 STROKES RANK 106]

1493 为 为  do, accomplish

With the strength of his arms, the thug had made the cutting marks with his knife, and realized that he had accomplished the killing deed.

[4 STROKES RANK 18]

1494 动 动  move

The essence of movement, particularly in the Chinese systems of exercise, is to appear light as a cloud yet perform with controlled strength.

[6 STROKES RANK 73]

1495 川 川  river

The flowing water runs between the two banks of the river. Here, the left bank has a curved path not present on the right.

[3 STROKES RANK 1109]

1496 顺 顺  in the direction of

Envision a river full of leaves. All the leaves flow in the direction of the current—a dramatic sight.

[9 STROKES RANK 938]
UNIT 61, §§1497–1502  

1497 荒 荒 desolate  
Read the components from the bottom up: The action of the flooded river causes the our house to perish. There’s slimy grass and gook all over. The desolation is total.  

1498 慌 慌 panic, nervous  
My heart palpitates madly in the presence of great desolation. I have become nervous to the point of panic, for what will become of us?  

1499 州 州 state, province  
We’ll use the ‘river’ as a metaphor for natural resources. This character shows an area so large that parts possess abundant resources, while other parts possess very little. A region so vast forms a separate state.  

1500 洲 洲 continent  
Water surrounds a group of states—this defines a continent.  

1501 步 步 step  
A step starts with a stop (so to speak), followed by a small amount of action on your part.  

1502 涉 涉 wade, ford  
The verb ‘wade’ refers to steps you take in the water.
亦 亦  also, too

1 A little kid is running down the path after the big kids, arms swinging from his sides. “Hey, wait for me! I want to come, too!”
2 As kids, some of us loved collecting lightning bugs and trapping them live in a covered but small bottle. A few of them could co-exist peacefully, but if there were too many, some of them made a bee-line to the cover as an action to escape. The ‘too’ we highlight in this narrative is, to be sure, the wrong meaning, but it is the right word.

赤 赤  red, be flushed

This is silly, but here I am dressed up in a bizarre party costume, and this is my hat. A pile of earth from which a bunch of roots dangle rests on the hat brim. No wonder my face is all flushed in embarrassment!

赫 赫  awe-inspiring

Two people with the same party hat at the same party? Awesome, dude.

老 老  old

On our life path back into the grave’s earth, one prominent change is in our hair, which whitens as we get old.
Unit 62
In the Blink of an Eye

1507 輪 輪 wheel, wheel-like  car 1430  order, coherence 457 lún

BF It’s the wheels that bring order to a car.  [8 STROKES  RANK 1096]

1508 匆 匆 hasty  spoon 642  action path (times 2) 1421 cōng

BF I’ve got to take this spoonful of medicine. I move too hastily and the medicine streams off the spoon’s edge, in two action paths.

It’s very tempting to see this character as 勿 ‘do not’ (§1424) with some sort of dab-like stroke. If this composition is more to your liking, then fine.  [5 STROKES  RANK 1622]

1509 俞 俞 consent  join; combine 325  boat, ship 597 (altered)  river 1495 (altered) yú

BF Well, I combined the materials to construct a small boat to travel the river. It wasn’t the best ever built, but my Master consented to give me credit for it.  [9 STROKES  RANK 3251]

1510 愉 愉 happy, joyful  heart (skinny) 930  consent 1509 yú

BF I am happy over my Master’s consent and the accompanying emotions of joyfulness.  [12 STROKES  RANK 1982]

1511 吻 吻 kiss  mouth 41  do not 1424 wěn

A kiss is often an unwanted overture. In such cases, do not bring your lips near your beloved’s mouth.  [7 STROKES  RANK 1973]
1512 扮 扮 dress up as, disguise as

The best disguises are those created out of everyday materials. In preparation, we watch a hand separate articles of clothing in preparation for the ultimate outfit.

1513 乃 乃 so, therefore

Words like ‘so’ and ‘therefore’ refer to results. If I use my bow to take action, results will follow.

When it appears as a component, we may let it represent ‘results’.

1514 隽 隽 handsome, talented

BF I need to impress this really handsome guy I am dating, so therefore I bought him a pet bird.

1515 携 携 carry, take along

I take along by hand the handsome little boy. Too bad his behavior doesn’t match his appearance.

1516 套 套 sheath, cover

BF As my grandmother used to say, every pot has a cover. That is, the cover matches the container exactly in terms of size and length, among other attributes. The alterations to the ‘long, length’ component look very similar to the traditional form.

1517 象 象 elephant

What an animal! Vaguely pig-like in form, with huge eyes at a funny angle that fix you with almost human expressiveness, and so big that a man can ride on top—now that’s an elephant.
1518 豫豫 pleased, content
 BF That’s me—the guy on the back of the elephant, and the elephant is giving me the ride of my life. I am pleased and content at the novelty of it all.

[15 STROKES RANK 1956]

1519 像像 resemble
 Some readers may be old enough to remember elephant jokes. Why does a man resemble an elephant? They both walk on two legs—except for the elephant. (This would have gotten big belly laughs in 1963.)

[13 STROKES RANK 294]

1520 旁旁 side
 BF To my eyes, the ‘square’ on the bottom looks like a football lineman plowing into an opponent standing firm against him. Something’s got to give, though, and one of them will get shunted to the side.

[10 STROKES RANK 981]

1521 膀膀 upper arm, shoulder
 BF In a human, the side of the carcass comprises the upper arm or shoulder.

[14 STROKES RANK 1941]

1522 卯卯 early morning
 (This is the fourth of the so-called Earthly Branches, and refers to the time period 5–7 AM.)
 At this time of the day, so early in the morning, it’s only the pillow that holds my head high, and it’s a struggle to perform any meaningful action.

[5 STROKES RANK 3926]

1523 留留 retain, stay
 To retain ownership of your fields, you have to start work every day very early in the morning.

[10 STROKES RANK 554]
1524 溜溜 slide, glide, sneak off
water r 523 retain, stay 1523 liū
No crops grow in the winter. Starting in January, I allow my fields to retain water which soon freezes so friends can skate and glide across the surface.
[13 STROKES RANK 1923]

1525 贸贸 commerce, trade
early morning 1522 (altered) cowrie 430 mào
BF “The early bird catches the worm.” Trade with money starts very early in the day.
[9 STROKES RANK 1092]

1526 肠肠 intestines
meat 317 (altered) easy 1427 (altered) cháng
During dissections in biology lab, all the organs looked the same to me, except for the intestines. They were by far the easiest part of the body to identify, by virtue of their ropiness.
[7 STROKES RANK 1921]

1527 汤汤 soup
water r 523 easy 1427 (altered) tāng
Soup is easy to make. Hot water is the main ingredient, and then add whatever else is at hand.
[6 STROKES RANK 1618]

1528 扬扬 raise, wave
hand r 29 easy 1427 (altered) yáng
BF Waving is an easy activity for a hand. That’s why it’s one of the first things babies do.
[6 STROKES RANK 1084]

1529 杨杨 poplar
tree 375 easy 1427 (altered) yáng
BF Poplars are particularly easy trees to cultivate and grow. Because it’s easy to grow and looks so good in the garden, the poplar has become quite popular!
[7 STROKES RANK 1062]

1530 扔扔 throw, toss
hand r 29 so, therefore 1513 rēng
One of the easiest ways to get results is to use your hand to throw something at your professor!
[5 STROKES RANK 1905]
1531 库 库  
warehouse, storehouse  
Nowadays, warehouse stores are so vast and cavernous that employees use special cars to drive around the expansive structure.  

1532 加 加  
add, increase  
Ever been to a kid’s birthday party? The stronger voices are, they more they add to the festivity of the occasion.
A product possessing few strengths is certainly of low quality.

Why do freshly-mowed lawns smell so fragrant? It has to do with the action of the lawnmower blades, which thresh and separate the stalks of grass and so release one of the great smells of summer.

I forgot to hem the silk handkerchief I was making as a gift. When my rotten little brother came along and cut it with a scissors, it separated into its numerous component threads.

The beggar women constantly surround rich gentlemen on their way home and hinder their progress.

If you make a contraption by adding pieces of wood together, you’ll be able to prop up something heavy.
excellent, praise
In ancient schools, beans were a reward for good work. The more beans you got, the better your grade. If the teacher added ten beans to your grade, you knew your performance was truly excellent.

BF In ancient schools, beans were a reward for good work. The more beans you got, the better your grade. If the teacher added ten beans to your grade, you knew your performance was truly excellent. [14 STROKES RANK 1845]

guest, visitor
In the old days, the most notorious of guests were soldiers which the government forced you to shelter under your roof.

BF In the old days, the most notorious of guests were soldiers which the government forced you to shelter under your roof. [10 STROKES RANK 1534]

rob, plunder
When soldiers go out of their camps intending to use their strength, it can only be for one purpose—to rob and plunder.

BF When soldiers go out of their camps intending to use their strength, it can only be for one purpose—to rob and plunder. [7 STROKES RANK 1825]

harness, draw a cart
All you have to do is add some special equipment to the horse, like a harness, and you can use the animal to draw a cart.

BF All you have to do is add some special equipment to the horse, like a harness, and you can use the animal to draw a cart. [8 STROKES RANK 1567]

congratulate
When are congratulations called for? From a Chinese point of view, sudden increase in wealth is one such occasion.

BF When are congratulations called for? From a Chinese point of view, sudden increase in wealth is one such occasion. [9 STROKES RANK 1690]

stretch, expand
How does a bow manage to change its length? It stretches and expands under the care of a skillful archer.

BF How does a bow manage to change its length? It stretches and expands under the care of a skillful archer. [7 STROKES RANK 318]

rise (water, prices)
Figuratively, the waters of the river 'expand' when the water level rises.

BF Figuratively, the waters of the river 'expand' when the water level rises. [10 STROKES RANK 1803]
契 契  contract, legal agreement
plentiful 12  knife 1480  big 330
契契

BF A contract in our modern world is a document stipulating conditions for the mutual benefit of the two sides to an agreement. What form would contracts have taken in pre-literate societies? Perhaps a knife would mark the conditions on some permanent surface, and people would agree to make this the permanent record for important (‘big’) legal agreements.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1819]

场 场  gathering place, field
earth, soil 9  easy 1427 (altered)
场场

It’s easy to set up open-air fairs and markets on wide-open expanses of earth. Such fields became gathering places which gave rise to markets.
[6 STROKES  RANK 249]

另 另  other, another
mouth 41  strength 1492
另另

Poor people often curse the existence of destitute relatives. “Another mouth to feed! I’ll need all my strength to earn more money.”
[5 STROKES  RANK 489]

别 别  do not, must not
other, another 1547  knife r 166
别别

There are two kitchen knives on the counter. One is dull, the other is deadly sharp. Whatever you do, do not play around with the sharp one.
[7 STROKES  RANK 222]

切 切  cut, slice
seven 137  knife 1489
切切

That expensive set of seven knives makes precision slicing and cutting a breeze.
[4 STROKES  RANK 337]

办 办  do, manage, set up
strength 1492  eight 1048
办办

The ‘eight’ that should have been at the top represents something that’s indivisible, and the task at hand is to split it in two. With the application of great strength, we can do this.
[4 STROKES  RANK 367]
功 功  merit, achievement  labor, work  strength  gōng
By virtue of my hard work and my strength of will, I received the highest award for meritorious achievement.

召 召  call, convene  knife  mouth  zhào
Every family is different in their own way. A had a friend once whose mother tapped a knife against the teeth in her mouth when she wanted to call the whole family together.

招 招  beckon, enlist  hand  call, convene  zhāo
Figuratively speaking, the recruiter waves his hand towards you to enlist you to join the call to serve your country.

昭 昭  clear, obvious  day, sun  call, convene  zhāo
BF They convened the meeting early in the day, because in the bright light it would be clear who the troublemakers were.

照 照  shine, illuminate  clear, obvious  fire  zhào
The fire reflected in the obviously valuable antiques in the room shone fiercely and emphasized the richness of the furnishings.

绍 绍  connect, introduce  silk  call, convene  shào
BF Silk threads are like cords connecting the parties who have been called together for a group wedding in some exotic religious cult. Think of it, until now these potential mates have never even been introduced.

超 超  overtake, surpass, super-  to walk  call, convene  cháò
BF Yeesh—I just found out about the super-important meeting that’s been called. I have to walk fast so I can overtake everyone else and get the seat closest to my boss.
The sun rises in the east, vividly lighting up the special landscaping on the hills that we’ve put on display.
The terrorists almost succeeded in throwing me off the cliff. I held on by my fingertips, and used all my strength to pull myself up to safety. What an experience!

I went into my house through the front door to see a giant square box aligned in the direction pointing to the moon.

Giant square hills are the best defense against hordes of marauding enemies. Because of their squareness, there are no gaps when lined up next to each other.

The forest cover on the mountainside is so lush that it forms a roof-like cover overhead and makes it well-nigh impassable. We must persevere through the dense and thick vegetation, for we need to reach the command camp by nightfall.

The old fool managed to run into a lamp post and knock himself out cold. A wandering healer threw some aromatic grass over him and managed to revive him.
1564 助 助 help, assist, aid
moreover 15 strength 1492 zhù
You can help yourself to whatever you want—even if it’s not yours—as long as you have more (over) strength than anyone else. [7 STROKES RANK 607]

1565 男 男 male
field 57 strength 1492 nán
BF Only men have the strength to plow a field. [7 STROKES RANK 602]

1566 仍 仍 still, yet, again and again
man r 953 so, therefore 1513 réng
At first, the task looks impossible. But a man tries it again and again, and therefore he achieves the proper result. [4 STROKES RANK 601]

1567 勉 勉 strive to, do with effort
dismiss, fire, exempt 477 strength 1492 miǎn
BF The new hire exerted great strength to counter the allegations which led to his dismissal. He did strive to retain his position. [9 STROKES RANK 2078]

1568 伤 伤 injure, wound
man r 953 man 311 (altered) strength 1492 shāng
Two men doing something that involves great strength. It must be a fight, and one man is trying his best to injure the other man. [6 STROKES RANK 660]

1569 初 初 at first
clothing r 838 knife 1489 chū
BF At first you need to use your knife to cut the cloth and make clothing. [7 STROKES RANK 667]

1570 劳 劳 toil
glass r 94 cover 268 strength 1492 láo
BF One needs great strength to haul dried grass into the hut and to create a thatched roof. All in all, too much toil is required. [7 STROKES RANK 679]
harmonize, cooperate, assist
 BF Only with cooperation and inter-personal harmony can ten people manage to finish the job.

coerce, force
 BF I use a rottting, stinking piece of meat as a club by which I manage to get my way, as I force you to do what I want you to do.

battle array
 The insurgents have been training for months! Down from the hills roll their chariots, all in perfect battle array.

evil, odd
 BF From afar, towns, with their jagged profiles, can look like a mouth full of rotten teeth, and are frequent metaphors for evil and depravity.

penetrate, pierce
 The cavity in my tooth was hurting me. The dentist said it was so big, it threatened to pierce the tooth, and then where would I be?

share, portion
 Let’s take that man’s money. We can divide it into equal amounts, so we each get a share. Let’s do it fast, before the cops get here!

bent, curved, crooked
 Imagine two (sounds like ‘too’) bows lying in a heap. What a tangled mess of bent wood!
1578 湾湾 gulf, bay  
\[\text{BF} A \text{ sharply bent section of coast enclosing a body of water defines a bay.}\]

1579 忽忽 suddenly*  
\[\text{BF Don’t scare me like that. My heart is beating wildly. It’s your sudden (and unwanted!) kiss that did it to me.}\]

1580 输输 transport, convey  
\[\text{BF My parents consented for me to use the car to transport all my friends to the dance.}\]

1581 勒勒 bridle, rein in  
\[\text{BF Trying to rein in my horse, I used too much strength—in fact, I killed him! Now he’s just glue and hide.}\]

1582 载载 write down, year  
\[\text{Did you see that!? That crazy guy attacked the new car with a big sword, which was so sharp that the front end fell to the ground—and it was this year’s model, too. Then the attacker got back into his vehicle and drove off, but not before I wrote down his plate number.}\]

1583 练练 practice, train, drill  
\[\text{I practice my Chinese martial arts every morning. Wearing silk pajamas, I face east for this daily regimen.}\]

1584 炼炼 smelt, refine  
\[\text{The blowing wind forces the fire to travel east. What a disaster! The fire is so hot it smelts the metal in all the houses it destroys.}\]
Unit 65
Stopping and Starting

1585
诸 诸 all, various
The big thing about speech is that you can use it to express all kinds of meanings.

1586
猪 猪 hog, pig
Believe it or not, a pig shares many positive abilities with a dog. It’s loyal, smart, trainable, long-lived—and you can eat it, too.

1587
绪 绪 matter’s beginning
BF Imagine that the beginning of important matters was commemorated by a small but precious token, such as a piece of worked silk. Such a gift was entrusted only to a person capable of carrying out the duty.

1588
训 训 lecture, train, teach
A qualified lecturer or teacher is one whose speech flows like a river.

1589
访 访 visit, call on, seek
BF I need to visit my cousin. I speak to the old gent in the square to see if I’m on the right track.
蒙 蒙 cheat, hoodwink
- grass r 94 - smooth cover 280 (altered) - pig, boar 1425 (altered)

Feral pigs are smart and strong. We have to **hoodwink** them to catch them. Here’s one that’s already been trapped. It’s in a deep pit, topped by a **reinforced cover**. A layer of **grass** fooled the animal into walking over it.

1591 鬼 鬼 ghost, spirit
- white 201 - action path 1421 - mineshaft 135 - private 750

In European traditions, a ghost is this big **white** thing, with long smoky limbs capable of all kinds of **action**. Generally, you only “see” them when it’s as dark as possible, like the darkness of a **mineshaft**. Of course, the most horrifying ghosts of all are one’s **private** ghosts.

1592 软 软 soft, pliant
- car 1430 - owe, lack 465

**Softness** and **pliability** had better be qualities that cars lack!

1593 秀 秀 to flower, put forth ears of grain
- rice or grain 409 - so, therefore 1513

**BF** Springtime: time to plant the **grain**. Autumn: the **result** is **ears of grain**, ripe for harvesting.

1594 诱 诱 guide, lead, induce
- speech r 615 - to flower, put forth ears of grain 1593

**BF** Speaking with **flowery** phrases induces the electorate to vote you into office.

1595 魔 魔 devil, evil spirit, monster
- hemp, pocked, pitted 694 (altered) - ghost, spirit 1591

**BF** The ghost wore a **linen** cape to frighten people. Why does it have to be linen? It’s so hard to clean and iron! I’ll have to work double-hard to keep it fresh and pressed. This **ghost** is truly an **evil spirit**.
BF The *mark* on the *knife* emphasizes its “business end”—the *blade edge*.

That noisy couple down the hall is in a dreadful, toxic relationship. She loves her man dearly, but he never spends his nights with her. It’s like a *knife* in her *heart* that she must *endure*!

The way to cross *water* (in ancient times) was to use a knife’s *blade edge* or other such tool to work a *tree* into the architectural elements out of which they could build a *bridge*.

Chiang Kai-Shek (Cantonese pronunciation) was the head of the Republic of China from 1928 through 1975. His name in Mandarin is Jiāng Jièshí, which accounts for the relatively high frequency of this word. 蒋 appears not to have any other meaning.

Chiang Kai-Shek achieved prominence by virtue of his leadership and capability in *handling matters*. The *grass* laurels he wears on top demonstrate the honor accorded him by the Chinese people.

To get the maximum *penetrating* power of floor stain you need to *stomp* on it, mash it with a *spoon*, and cut it with a *knife*.
1601 仿 仿  
imitate, copy, resemble  
\[ \text{man r 953} \quad \text{square, direction 1491} \]  
fāng  
This character seems to show a man trying to imitate a dancer. Outstretched arms, bent legs, but something is not quite right. He looks like he’s collapsing on the ground—not the proper direction at all.  
\[6 \text{ STROKES  RANK 1259}\]

1602 象 象  
determine, make a judgment  
\[ \text{mutual 20 (altered)} \quad \text{pig, boar 1425} \]  
tuán  
BF Watch out for pigs! A mutual friend got in one’s way at dinner time, and suffered severe lacerations and other alterations. He determined then and there—never trust a pig on its way to the dinner bowl.  
\[9 \text{ STROKES  RANK 6434}\]

1603 缘 缘  
reason*, cause*  
\[ \text{silk r 807} \quad \text{determine, make a judgment 1602} \]  
yuán  
BF The reason that judges wear silk robes is this: it’s more impressive when they render judgment.  
\[12 \text{ STROKES  RANK 1274}\]

1604 奶 奶  
breast*, milk*  
\[ \text{woman 581} \quad \text{so, therefore 1513 (altered)} \]  
nǎi  
In olden times, it must have seemed that the inevitable result of a mature woman was childbirth and breastfeeding.  
\[5 \text{ STROKES  RANK 1278}\]

1605 偷 偷  
steal, pilfer  
\[ \text{man r 953} \quad \text{consent 1509} \]  
tōu  
A man who takes things without the owner’s consent is guilty of stealing.  
\[11 \text{ STROKES  RANK 1284}\]

1606 愈 愈  
the more—the more  
\[ \text{consent 1509} \quad \text{heart (fat) 906} \]  
yù  
The more I consent to go out with her, the more I feel a growing emotional attachment. Where will it end?  
\[13 \text{ STROKES  RANK 1301}\]
1607 穷 穷 impoverished, exhausted

The hike was so **exhausting** we used our last reserves of **strength** to crawl into the **cave**.

1608 魂 魂 soul, spirit, mood

Chinese **ghosts** are more solid than ours. A particularly “**cloudy**” ghost serves as a **spirit** or **soul**.

1609 劲 劲 vigor, energy

The **man** does his **work** using great **strength**, showing great **vigor** and **energy**.

1610 贫 贫 poor

When **money** is **divided** among many people, nobody gets enough, and nobody is happy. Everybody stays **poor**.
1611 荡荡 swing, shake, wash away
By error, they put locoweed in the soup. Anybody who ate it began to shake for a short bit.

1612 矛矛 lance, pike, spear
Our umpteenth-great-grandfather was off on a hunt. “Give it to ’em good! We need plenty of action to bring home the bacon. May your spear fly true!”

1613 柔柔 soft, supple, gentle
BF The woodsman uses his spear to pound the hardwood tree to make it soft enough to work with.

1614 励励 encourage, exhort
BF “Everyone thinks the clods on the other team are harsh and severe. But you guys can do it. Combine your strength and you’ll win.” With these shouts of encouragement, we know we can win!

1615 券券 ticket, certificate
The rock concert is all sold out. Some thug has approached a man with tickets; watch the drops of sweat fly off his face. The Mugger uses a knife to rob the man of his tickets.
1616 粉粉 powder
Start with rice, and now keep dividing it into ever smaller particles. Soon enough, you’ll end up with a handful of powder, suitable for makeup or cooking.

1617 豪豪 super-talented person
BF A pig as part of a character for a talented fellow? Well, in Chinese tradition, pigs and boars are fat, prosperous, and happy. A person with high levels of pigness is apt therefore to have superior talents. After all, they named a Chinese year after the pig!

1618 储储 store up, save
BF A person who saves up their lifetime experiences doesn’t hesitate to draw upon them to make a point. Such a person makes a fine speaker.

1619 蓬蓬 flourishing, thriving
BF If the family environment is strong, children get a chance to grow old in thriving health.

1620 频频 frequently, repeatedly
Walking around—taking step after step—and reading, where you keep turning page after page, are examples of repetitious activities.

1621 伪伪 false, fake, bogus
BF When men claim they’ve done something, but they haven’t, those claims are bogus! The dotted diagonal line that’s part of ‘do, accomplish’ emphasizes the unreality, the falseness of the deed.
1622 勤 勤 diligent, hardworking

It takes diligence and strength to lay the raw hide on the earth and work it until it’s fully cured, flexible, and usable.

1623 幼 幼 young

BF As young creatures grow in skills, they continually test their strength, and that of their parents.

1624 芳 芳 fragrant, virtuous (name)

BF The right kind of grasses are those with fragrant flowers.

1625 帐 帐 curtain, canopy

BF You form a curtain from a long piece of towel.

1626 辖 辖 have jurisdiction over

BF That car ran into you and injured you. You can’t do anything yourself—the courts have jurisdiction over the matter.

1627 魏 魏 Wei dynasty

Perhaps the Wei emperors chose this graph—composed of two dejected images—to show that they could rise above such matters.

1628 梯 梯 ladder

BF Ladders are made from trees, and the sinuous nature of the ‘younger brother’ part suggests its rungs.
1629 抛 抛 toss, fling, abandon  
\[\text{hand r } 29 \quad \text{man } 311 \text{ (altered)} \quad \text{strength } 1492\] 
\text{pāo}

The *hand* and coiled right arm of a *man* used great *strength* to *fling* the grenade as far away as possible.  
[7 STROKES RANK 1692]

1630 身 身 human body  
\[\text{CMP}\] Make way for the very pregnant lady as she travels to the left across the page. She’s facing a heavy wind. It is her profile which suggests ‘human body’.  

We see her in mid-stride. The vertical hooked stroke is the leg supporting her weight. The curved stroke to its left shows the other leg in readiness to step forward. One arm is stretched in front to help with balance, while the fingers of her other hand are splayed across her stomach in a protective gesture. Remember, there’s a strong wind blowing, and a bit of cloth—a protective kerchief?—blows up obscuring her face and head.  

1631 身 身 body  
\[\text{BF}\] human body 1630  
\[\text{shēn}\]  
[7 STROKES RANK 164]

1632 躺 躺 lie down  
\[\text{body } 1631 \quad \text{still, yet } 1139\] 
\text{tǎng}

A tired worker takes her *body* and *lies down* on the company cot. We are looking at it head on from ground level. The square head is covered by the blanket. Her two feet stick out from the other end, and the vertical stick in the middle represents her hands lying together.  
[15 STROKES RANK 1608]

1633 射 射 to shoot  
\[\text{body } 1631 \quad \text{inch } 210\] 
\text{shè}

Her *body shot* one-inch daggers with such a force they stopped the attackers in their tracks.  
[10 STROKES RANK 703]

1634 谢 谢 thank  
\[\text{speech r } 615 \quad \text{to shoot } 1633\] 
\text{xiè}

Some people have a macabre sense of amusement. Here’s a guy who *requested* the chance to be present at an execution, death by *firing* squad. Afterwards, he *thanked* his hosts profusely.  
[12 STROKES RANK 897]
1635  

moving hand

You see here a greatly altered hand (§27). The use of the action path (§1421) for the arm suggests motion.

1636  

left

You might think you see a hand moving in productive labor, but the hand dominates the labor in relative size to emphasize that there’s more movement than there is work—a typical inefficiency when most people use their left hand to try and do something.
1637 佐 佐 assist
BF Left-handed people are so clumsy that they need a man to assist them when they try to do meaningful work. (The current author is a lefty.)
[7 STROKES RANK 2081]

1638 右 右 right (-hand)
BF The right hand is so important because it's the moving hand we eat with—the hand we use to shove food into our mouths.
[5 STROKES RANK 783]

1639 若 若 seem, like, if
Using a thread made from grass, you use your dexterous right hand to repair the seams (sounds like seems!) of your clothes.
[8 STROKES RANK 651]

1640 惹 惹 to provoke, exasperate
Mowing the grass with the right hand only is one of those silly yet emotional things that teens do to provoke their parents.
[12 STROKES RANK 2272]

1641 布 布 cloth
Imagine a moving hand actively working with a towel. The implication is we’re treating the towel as raw material, and working it into finished cloth for sale or use.
[5 STROKES RANK 380]
1642 无 无 un-, -less  ■ moving hand 1635  ■ one 2  ■ mineshaft 135  wú
I move my hand, and nastily grab the one thing that means the most to my beloved. Unfeelingly, I heartlessly throw it down the mineshaft without a backward glance.

[4 STROKES RANK 105]

1643 抚 抚 comfort, console  ■ hand r 29  ■ un-, -less 1642  fǔ
The touch of a human hand consoles a mourner by helping him feel less pain.

[7 STROKES RANK 1720]

1644 尤 尤 blame, fault  ■ moving hand 1635  ■ dab 169  ■ mineshaft 135  yóu
BF It’s dark and gloomy, so I can’t see all the details, but somebody’s moving hand carries a small something to the edge of the mineshaft, and drops it down. It’s surely the smoking gun evidence that would solve the brutal crime. If I could see the person, I would know who’s to blame.

[4 STROKES RANK 1099]

1645 扰 扰 disturb, bother  ■ hand r 29  ■ blame, fault 1644  rǎo
In the middle of my first decent sleep in over 36 hours, you tripped, and landed with your hand right in my face. It’s your fault I woke up, and I’ll never forgive you for disturbing me.

[7 STROKES RANK 1483]

1646 忧 忧 worry, anxiety  ■ heart (skinny) 930  ■ blame, fault 1644  yōu
BF Emotions caused by blame are worry and anxiety.

[7 STROKES RANK 1461]

1647 优 优 excellent, superior  ■ man r 953  ■ blame, fault 1644  yōu
BF This man I know always manages not to be overcome by feelings of guilt. What an excellent way to be!

[6 STROKES RANK 774]

1648 就 就 then  ■ capital city 1077  ■ blame, fault 1644  jiù
(This is an extremely common word with an abundance of meanings, of which ‘then’ is among the most common.) If a particularly dreadful crime is your fault, then you may suffer capital punishment!

[12 STROKES RANK 27]
UNIT 67, §§1649–1654  MASCULINE AND FEMININE

1649 龙 龙  dragon  
Look at this character as a pictograph. You see a man with an injured right leg; the action path is some massive bandage or cast. The patient or prisoner is trying to walk, but it’s such an effort that a drop of sweat flies in the air. And he’s not really walking, either—he’s just draggin’ (sounds like dragon!) himself along.

[5 STROKES  RANK 696]

1650 庞 庞  very large  
BF Look how the dragon sticks out from its shelter because it’s so very large!

[8 STROKES  RANK 1849]

1651 沈 沈  to sink  
Someone has flooded the mineshaft with water. You’re struggling to hold yourself up—those are your fingers at the ends of the moving hand, trying to grab onto the edge of the mine—but it’s a losing battle. You’re slowly sinking.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1681]

1652 灰 灰  gray, ash  
If you use your hand to put out the fire, it will get covered with gray ash.

[6 STROKES  RANK 1311]

1653 恢 恢  extensive, vast  
BF A giant heart is somehow being stretched vertically. The taller it gets, the more its color turns from healthy pinkish red to ashen gray. At the end of this procedure, the heart has become extensive and vast.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1364]

1654 宏 宏  great, grand  
BF In the privacy of my grand and palatial home, under my own roof, I can move my hand as much as I want with no fear of breaking things (as sometimes happened in the past!).

[7 STROKES  RANK 1798]
1655  雄  雄  male, mighty  
 BF You can tell the mighty army is made up solely of men. They’re all moving their hands in silly salutes, even the privates, and their fancy uniforms invites comparison with fancy short-tailed birds.  
 [12 STROKES  RANK 1054]

1656  犹  犹  just as, just like  
 BF We’ll use this term to mean similarity or the same as.  
 If you look at wildly distinct breeds of dogs (Irish wolfhounds and Boston terriers), it’s hard to believe they belong to the same species.  
 [7 STROKES  RANK 1230]

1657  获  获  capture, catch  
 BF I use two dogs to capture prey in the grassy fields and meadows.  
 [10 STROKES  RANK 688]

1658  诺  诺  to promise  
 BF His love speech seemed like eternal promises of undying love, but he was as deceitful as all the others. She felt her life was ruined.  
 [10 STROKES  RANK 969]

1659  袭  袭  raid, make a surprise attack  
 BF Who would suspect a herd of dragons wearing tutus, Speedo swim trunks, and other outrageous clothing would be preparing a surprise attack on the settlers?  
 [11 STROKES  RANK 1213]

1660  怖  怖  fear, be afraid  
 BF When you are in the grip of extreme fear, it feels like someone has wrapped your heart in a cloth strip which they are pulling tight.  
 [8 STROKES  RANK 1776]
1661 笼 笼 cage, coop, basket bamboo r 243  dragon 1649 lóng

BF How do you build a cage for a dragon? Very carefully. It turns out bamboo is the best, for it flexes without breaking. [11 STROKES RANK 1928]

1662 羊 羊 running sheep

CMP Take the sheep (§1147) and replace its backbone by the action path (§1421) to suggest a moving or running sheep.
1663 差差 lack, short of
Here's a pesky running sheep that has destroyed our work, a shelter for those inclement days herding sheep. The work has to be redone; we lack completion.

1664 羞羞 shame, embarrass
We find ourselves in the middle of a fairy tale. The beautiful princess has been enchanted so as to appear hideous to one and all. To protect against the shame and embarrassment she feels when the handsome prince enters, she hides behind one of the running sheep in the king's herds.

1665 着着 indicates continuing progress
Little sheep never keep still. The shepherd uses his eye to keep track of their continuing progress.

1666 判判 judge, decide
The trial is winding up. The jury sees all the evidence—a mutilated sheep corpse (two legs missing) and a bloody knife, and now it's up to them to decide the verdict.
1667 升 升 action scaffolding

The curved stroke represents a path on which something travels up. When it gets to the top, it rests on the horizontal stroke of the simple scaffolding structure which supports it.

CMP

1668 升 升 raise, hoist

The bit at the top of the scaffolding represents something that moved up, so it’s being hoisted up.

[4 STROKES RANK 837]

1669 弄 弄 make, do, manage

The king on the scaffolding oversees his subjects, and manages their lives.

[7 STROKES RANK 1053]

1670 卉 卉 kinds of grasses

How do we fasten together the struts that make up the scaffolding? From a short distance, this glyph looks like a sheaf of tall, uncut grass of many varieties, waving in the breeze. And that’s what we’ll use, several varieties—metaphorically, ten—as cords to bind the rods together.

[5 STROKES RANK 3341]

1671 奔 奔 head for

That pile of grass clippings on my neighbor’s lawn is so big that all the circus elephants are heading for it.

[8 STROKES RANK 1285]
1672 井 井 well

1. The single bar near the top of the scaffolding represents one aqueduct for water pumped from a nearby well.
2. The horizontals and (near) verticals represent the division of land into neighboring fields. The only reason they can flourish despite their proximity to each other is the central well, which provides plenty of water for every one of the farmers.
3. The criss-cross pattern of lines represents a protective grid across the top of the well. You can drop your bucket down to get water, but kids and other large things can’t fall through. [4 STROKES RANK 1431]

1673 开 开 operate

There’s one person on top of the scaffolding, and it’s she who gets to operate all the machinery. [4 STROKES RANK 94]

1674 行 行 punishment, sentence

BF The prisoner has received the most severe punishment and sentencing possible—decapitation, and we are a little too late to witness the grisly act. On the left is the headless body, and we see the shoulders and arms, and the two legs; one is dangling out to the left in a final gallows twitch. The huge knife which can so easily lop off a human head is also present. [6 STROKES RANK 1087]

1675 型 型 mold, model, pattern

BF Each society sets up a pattern of proper behavior for its citizens. Violate this code? Following punishment, you’ll rest in the earth, either permanently (capital offense) or not (early prisons were dug into the earth). [9 STROKES RANK 556]

1676 研 研 to grind

Oops—the giant rock slipped off the scaffolding, and ground the unlucky pedestrian to a bloody pulp. (You can see the ‘mouth’ on the bottom, as someone screams briefly in agony.) [9 STROKES RANK 447]
1677 **bing** an intensifier

(An *intensifier* is a word like *really* or *truly*. In modern Mandarin, **bing** may only be used in front of a negative: This book is *really* uninteresting.)

*Operating* a machine is an example of an activity, and affixing a sign of ‘*abundance*’ to it **intensifies** this sense of activity. Activity is work, and no one likes work, so in this way, **bing** acquires a negative association.

[6 STROKES RANK 141]

1678 **pin** spell

In the United States, we have spelling bees, while in China, where ‘*spelling*’ refers to the proper composition of a character, appreciation of *spelling* goes *hand* in *hand* with appreciation of fine calligraphy. In either case, *spelling* evokes *intense* feelings.

[9 STROKES RANK 1820]

1679 **bing** hold one’s breath

**BF** The unburied *corps* has begun to smell, and its stench is *intensely* bad. Mourners have to *hold* their *breath* or else they’ll pass out.

[9 STROKES RANK 1891]

1680 **geng** plow, till

In ancient times, they made *plows* out of *two* trees, one for the handle and one for the ‘blade’. The lengths of the strokes in ‘*two*’ are altered to emphasize that the handle was longer than the part that digs into the soil. The four strokes of the ‘*well*’ map out the pattern of furrows in the soil.

[10 STROKES RANK 1850]

1681 **xing** form, shape

**BF** Eeks—a serious accident at the farm. The old man was *operating* the tractor, and ran someone over! It’s pretty bad—we can see the *feathery* tracks on the ground where the body was dragged, but the actual *shape* of the body is still hidden under the machine itself.

[7 STROKES RANK 269]

1682 **jiang** talk, speak, speaking of

The genie’s *speech* rose mysteriously from the *well* and asked us to *speak* our wishes to him more clearly.

[6 STROKES RANK 555]
1683 异 异 different, strange, unusual

BF Our manager, fat and bald, is quite a character. Here he is, the great man himself, climbing up the scaffolding to hang a ‘Happy New Year’ sign in Chinese. Everyone thought it was strange and unusual.

[6 STROKES RANK 709]

1684 舛 舛 error, incongruous

BF Working at evening time under improper conditions (such as poor lighting) leads to outrageous errors. Just look at what a poor job they made of the scaffolding!

[6 STROKES RANK 4694]

1685 舞 舞 dance

Forty people, mostly men, on the dance floor, all newbies. It’s bound to lead to errors and incongruities—just look at the tall woman dancing with the male midget, and listen to the cries from people whose toes have been stepped on!

[14 STROKES RANK 1144]

1686 戒 戒 guard against, warn

BF The scaffolding serves as a perfect setting to stand, sword poised, to guard against evildoers trying to kidnap the princess.

[7 STROKES RANK 1566]

1687 械 械 machinery, mechanical

BF In order to make the tree suitable to guard us against danger, we need to work it with some machinery.

[11 STROKES RANK 1657]

1688 巖 巖 steadfast soul

CMP A person engaged in many activities Nevertheless always returns to a fixed point, symbolized by a scepter, to do their duty.
The new servant appears completely reliable. This steadfast soul has to sweep up every morning using the special boar bristle broom, and so always returns in time to do this every morning.

This guy, known as a steadfast soul somehow decided to appear dressed only in a towel 'round his middle. How sexy and handsome he looks!

A teacher must set an example of steadfastness and that’s what they pay him for. See the money he gets?

The little ‘dab’ on top of ‘towel’ also makes me think ‘teacher’. The dab is a small piece of chalk for the blackboard, and the towel serves as blackboard eraser.

The characters 帅 ‘handsome’ and 师 ‘teacher’ (§§1690, 1691) differ by a single, small stroke. Teachers can, I suppose, be handsome, but they carry around that little piece of chalk all the time.

The two grids on either side represent organized groups of people, perhaps sitting in rows as in a team or class. They are are all steadfast people acting together, the kind you can rely on, and the best kind to have on a team or in a class.
CHINESE CHARACTERS: REMEMBER 2178 CHARACTER MEANINGS  UNIT 69, §§1693–1698

1693 卯 卯 listening ear
basket, box 152  action path 1421  single ear 157
CMP Symbolically, we see sound traveling via the action path into the sound box, where it’s amplified magically so the ear can listen to it.

1694 聊 聊 to chat
ear 82  listening ear 1693 liáo
What activity do ears play a large part in? When your best friend gets ready to share some juicy gossip during a chat, that’s when you’re all ears!
[11 STROKES  RANK 1932]

1695 柳 柳 willow
tree 375  listening ear 1693 liǔ
BF The famous willow trees of China participate in an impressive event. During storms, the wind through the branches produces a clearly audible rustling to the listening ear.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1557]

1696 舞 舞 dancing girl
dancing girl 1696
CMP As in other components focusing on moving people, we just see the young woman’s legs, at the moment she’s in a graceful pirouette.

1697 介 介 introduce
man 311  dancing girl 1696 jiè
BF We are present at the introduction of a man to his future bride, a graceful young woman. The man just stands there, too nervous to budge, while the girl is so poised she has no trouble displaying her skill at dancing.
[4 STROKES  RANK 831]

1698 价 价 price
man 953  introduce 1697 jià
We saw in §1697 that the moment two young people meet serves to explain the character 介 ‘introduce’. But in those long-ago days, this introduction would not have taken place without the intervention of a professional matchmaker. There he is on the left, come to collect the price for his services.
[6 STROKES  RANK 409]
Buying a new property, a new field, requires getting to know all about it—its peculiarities, its pretty spots, stony areas, and so on. Then you will know the full scope and extent of this new acquisition.

The dancing girl gets closer to heaven because she’s so tall. Of course, this is an exaggeration, which is why we use a slightly exaggerated form of 天, ‘heaven’.

To me, this graph looks like a tall fashion model dressed in a fall jacket standing in a typical fashion pose.

The odd-looking woman is not only very tall, but has an emaciated, anorexic-looking body. She looks so fragile she might just shatter.

Tall trees made primordial engineers devise ways to build bridges. They used them as natural supports over which they could loop strong vines or they chopped the trees down and lay them over narrow valleys.

With the abundance of mighty trees on his property, the farmer has enough extra money to devote to his dancing girlfriend and to support her in the style in which she’d like to become accustomed.
1704 鼻 鼻 nose

BF The top component alerts us to the depiction of a person’s *self*, but it’s easy to interpret everything else pictographically. The middle ‘field’ is this person’s snub *nose*, bordered below by a thin mustache. Underneath is either the fold of skin directly below all our *noses*, or (if you prefer) two lines of exhaled breath.

[14 STROKES RANK 1335]

1705 毫 毫 long, fine hair

A *tall* strand of *hair* is a metaphor for one that is *long* and *fine*.

[11 STROKES RANK 879]

1706 弗 弗 not (literary)

The *dancing girl* played with the *bow*. What a mistake—in short order, she had tangled everything into a big *knot* (sounds like ‘not’).

[5 STROKES RANK 1257]

1707 佛 佛 Buddha

Who is *not* a *man*? The great *Buddha*, who is like a god.

[7 STROKES RANK 771]

1708 费 费 cost, spend, expend

Spent too much money? Result: *not* any *money* left in your wallet.

[9 STROKES RANK 486]

1709 阶 阶 stairs, rank or step

BF *He’ll* (sounds like ‘hill’) *introduce* me to the boss, so I can ride in the executive elevator, and don’t have to take the *stairs* to my office all the time.

[6 STROKES RANK 745]
1710 единственное единственное pinned bug  
CMP The upper trident savagely, even brutally, (think of the teeth of a wild boar) pins the flying insect (that’s whose action path we see) to the wall. It is a metaphor for being trapped—in a job, existence, or other situation.

From a different angle, it looks like something flew into a secure cage. You can only check in—you can’t check out!

1711 伊伊 he, she  
A person may feel trapped forever in their gender role.

1712 君君 monarch, lord  
It’s hard to believe, but interviews with monarchs reveal that they regard themselves as being imprisoned in their jobs, forced to serve as figureheads for the duration of their reigns. Does that not make them the metaphorical equal of a talking head pinned to a board?

1713 群群 herd, crowd, flock  
Sheep are metaphors for creatures that blindly follow their leader, whatever he does. These concepts together illustrate a herd or flock.

1714 肃肃 respectful, solemn  
BF Watch the finale of a Broadway extravaganza (at least part of it). See how many dancing showgirls! Courtesy of their stylized choreography, their performance onstage makes them resemble gaudy butterflies pinned to a board. Nevertheless, their choreography is so well-done, that you cannot help sitting in respectful attention.

The path of the pinned bug has been straightened out so it fits inside the character square.
Unit 70

The Thing Speaks for Itself

1715 啸 啸 to whistle  ㄇ mouth 41  ㄇ respectful, solemn 1714  xiào
Finally, you catch your breath from the beauty of this presentation (§1714). You use your mouth to make a respectful sound of appreciation—you whistle! [11 STROKES  RANK 2301]

1716 萧 萧 desolate, bleak  ㄇ grass r 94  ㄇ respectful, solemn 1714  xiāo
BF Ever see a truly well-tended lawn? Each blade of grass seems to stand respectfully at attention. Impressive, but in the end, you notice there’s no sign of homeliness—no games, no chairs to sit in, no nothin’. How desolate, how bleak. [11 STROKES  RANK 1898]

1717 牢 牢 safe place  ㄇ action path 1421  ㄇ place of refuge 111  CMP This character combines an active path (§1421) with the place of refuge (§111). It’s very similar to ‘borders’ (§127), but Chinese scribes seem to make a point of emphasizing the dynamic left side in some characters and leaving it straight in others.
This component often suggests a safe place, environment, or period in which to work.

1718 丹 丹 red, cinnabar  ㄇ safe place 1717  ㄇ cover 268  dān
Cover the heavy jar which is the only safe place to store the lab’s supply of mercury, whose ore (by the way) is cinnabar. [4 STROKES  RANK 1280]
1719 月 月 moon, month _safe place 1717 两 (altered)_yuè

Nighttime. Observe the reflection of the full moon in a lake, with the left and right boundaries displaying the edges of its silver path. The lake’s surface isn’t completely still, and the two horizontals represent a few small wavelets.

This glyph often represents an altered form of ‘meat’ (normally 肉), and commonly will represent a body part in this variation. [4 STROKES RANK 169]

1720 肩 肩 shoulder _door of house 724 月, month 1719_jiān

Your shoulder is the part of the body most suitable for bursting through doors. [8 STROKES RANK 1415]

1721 脏 脏 filthy _moon, month 1719 村 687_zāng

By light of the moon, the village takes a bath to rid itself of the filth tourists bring in. What a sight—all the quaint old buildings daintily stepping into the river and washing all over! [10 STROKES RANK 1634]

1722 青 青 nature’s color, unripe _plentiful 12 (altered) 月, month 1719_qīng

Nature’s colors are the ones that predominate in natural growth—blue and green. It was thought that harsh sun was inimical to such growth, but plentiful moonlight was responsible for lush harvests. Interestingly, the Chinese associate ‘green’ with ‘unripe’, as do we English speakers. [8 STROKES RANK 497]

1723 情 情 sentiment, sensibility _heart (skinny) 930 自然的色, unripe 1722_qíng

BF Sentiment is an emotion often associated with nature and her colors. [11 STROKES RANK 120]

1724 明 明 bright, clear _day, sun 63 月, month 1719 míng

BF Having the sun and moon act together is a charming metaphor for brightness. [8 STROKES RANK 121]
1725 有 有  have  
The moon, in an inferior position because it is in the background, shines over the earth’s bounty. You move your hand over it all to indicate that you have it all—it’s all yours.  

[6 STROKES RANK 8]

1726 前 前  before, in front of  
As a child, I once tried following a rainbow to find the legendary pot of gold. It was a clear night, so I followed the radiance of the moon, lighting a clear path whose edges were knife-edge sharp. Eventually, I had to stop when the walls of the town were in front of me, keeping me inside and the gold outside.  

[9 STROKES RANK 93]

1727 那 那  which? what? how?  
What an odd dream! It was nighttime, and the moon raced through the streets of the town on little lunar feet, which was why the stripes lag behind its enclosing part. How is this possible? What is going on?  

[6 STROKES RANK 38]

1728 周 周  week  
In ancient days, people sweated the earth to survive, either through farming or by hunting. In those days, recreation involved using your mouth—talking, singing, joking, screaming, and so on. The week is an environment during which people carried out these two types of actions.  

[8 STROKES RANK 490]

1729 雕 雕  carve, engrave  
The eagle, a famous short-tailed bird, is attacking the sheep! But it’s so weak (sounds like ‘week’) that it can’t tear the sheep to pieces, but can only carve some bloody gashes in the sheep’s body.  

[16 STROKES RANK 1829]
Within a *safe place*, everyone has chores to keep the enclosure safe and strong. Of *central* importance are tools whose *use* lightens everyone’s work. ‘Middle’ is slightly abbreviated, as a reminder that tools alter the material they work on.

I’m no Casanova, but even I know that *hands* have a central *use* in a passionate *embrace*.

The people have been striving for months to set up a new monument, a symbol of their victorious struggle against oppression. They’ve *just now* finished! The tall central rod is held up by several *useful* tools. A *single* crosspiece shelters all citizens, and a *dab* of cloth flutters defiantly as it catches the breeze.

When this character appears as a component in other characters, we may attach to it the meaning of ‘*monument*’ or ‘*statue*’.

I *caught* the murderer *just now* using only my *hands*, and we strung him up on the new *monument* as a warning. Watch his *hands* flutter in the breeze.

The *water* in the huge tsunami pounded the new war *memorial* causing it to topple. It was so heavy that all the land around it started sinking, and now it’s at the *water’s edge*.

The fuzzy *cattail* is a beloved and decorative *grass* you can find at the *water’s edge*.
1736 博 博  win, gain  

**BF** In a horse race, the *inch* by which the winner *just now* nosed out the second-place horse leads to an incredible and unexpected *win*; that’s what the ‘*ten*’ means.

[12 STROKES  RANK 965]

1737 傅 傅  teacher, instructor

**BF** That *man* is a terrific *teacher*! He *just now* taught me what an *inch* is.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1887]

1738 溥 溥  broad, extensive

**BF** The *water* in the pool near the *memorial* is a popular gathering place, and is full of the *inch*-long bits of stale bread that kids throw in for the ducks. The bread floats, and instantly spreads over a *broad* and *extensive* area.

[STROKES  RANK 3882]

1739 薄 薄  thin, flimsy

Our cheapskate neighbor planted a small amount of *grass* seed over a very *broad* area—a stupid way to save money. The lawn grew in *thin* and sparse and cheapened the entire neighborhood.

[16 STROKES  RANK 1433]

1740 能 能  can, able

We see *privacy* piled upon a *month* juxtaposed with an upended *comparison*. How does that suggest ‘*can*’? Better to interpret this character as a suggestive picture. ‘*Month*’ itself looks like a *can*, and a thirsty teenager’s *nose* appears above it as she is about to take a swig. The *ladle*-like shapes on the right (§142) show her shiny curls falling forward in delicate ringlets.

[10 STROKES  RANK 35]
Unit 71
Curiouser and Curiouser, Too

1741 明 明 friend

BF Yes, each of these components does look like ‘month’, but the scribes also associated this shape with ‘meat’. Here, imagine two meaty creatures—people or dogs or whatever—strolling along companionably, because they’re friends.

1742 鵬 鵬 roc

BF Despite the ferocity of this large fabulous bird, sailors considered the roc to be a friendly bird. How so? If they do manage to subdue it, they can feast off its flesh for a long, long time.

1743 郁 郁 lush

BF You have towns only in locations which are sufficiently lush to support their growth.

1744 霸 霸 overlord

BF It’s no fun being a peasant in ancient China! Each town is under the iron thumb of their overlord, compelled to offer monthly tribute. Tonight it’s raining barrels, but we still have to deliver our quota of leather hides to the castle.

1745 甬 甬 corridor, path

BF The corridors leading to the interior of the house are for private use only!
1746 痛 痛  painful  
Comparing the interior of a house to the body, the patient’s sickness was spreading throughout the corridors. This was very painful to the patient. 
[12 STROKES RANK 730]

1747 涌 涌  gush, well up  
The terrorists have blown up the dam! Water is flowing through the innermost corridors of all the houses, gushing up everywhere.  
[10 STROKES RANK 1642]

1748 勇 勇  brave, valiant  
The soldiers charging down the dark, gloomy corridor were quite strong, but even so it was such a scary place that we knew they were also quite brave.  
[9 STROKES RANK 1206]

1749 角 角  horn, corner, angle  
Craftsmen use a knife to carve various objects out of animal bones and horns.  
[7 STROKES RANK 736]

1750 解 解  untie, undo, take off  
The not-too-bright farmer is doing something with the ox. It looks like he’s got the knife on the animal’s horn, and is trying to take it off. The ox looks ready to kill him, and can you blame it?  
[13 STROKES RANK 201]

1751 期 期  period of time  
All the family, the distant cousins and recluses got together for a fabulous vacation. Now their time together is over, as the moon comes forward to cover them.  
[12 STROKES RANK 253]
1752 望 望  observe, gaze into distance  
perish 269  moon, month 1719  king 11  wàng
Perhaps this character refers to an old but persistent myth. If you *gaze* at the *king* by the light of the *moon*, you will surely *perish*.  [11 STROKES RANK 326]

1753  清 清  clear, clear up  
water r 523  nature’s color, unripe 1722  qīng
The effect of *natural colors* in the *waters* of a pristine tropical lagoon is one of perfect *clarity*.  [11 STROKES RANK 335]

1754  确 确  true, authentic  
stone, rock 1386  horn, corner, angle 1479  què
BF The carved image of the *horn* on the *stone* seal **authentically**ates the oath.  [12 STROKES RANK 331]

1755  睛 睛  eyeball  
eye 78  nature’s color, unripe 1722  jīng
BF Nowadays, people wear ornate glasses and contact lenses to camouflage and disguise the *eyes* that nature originally gave us. Look for an *eye* that’s a *natural color* to see a genuine *eyeball*.  [13 STROKES RANK 934]

1756  请 请  ask, invite, polite request  
speech r 615  nature’s color, unripe 1722  qǐng
Somebody *speaks* most *naturally* when they’re making a *request*.  [10 STROKES RANK 421]

1757  猜 猜  guess  
dog r 898  nature’s color, unripe 1722  cāi
Those *natural colored dogs* that run in packs—it’s hard to *guess* their breed.  [11 STROKES RANK 1598]

1758  精 精  perfect, excellent  
rice 1127  nature’s color, unripe 1722  jīng
Nowadays, people think that *natural-colored* brown *rice* is the *perfect* way to consume rice, as opposed to the white, refined variety.  [14 STROKES RANK 435]
1759 调调 tune, air  speech r 615 week 1728 diào
He whistled the same tune all week long to keep from going crazy at the job. He didn’t care for the other guys on his shift, so he rarely spoke to them. [10 STROKES RANK 400]

1760 静静 still, quiet, calm  nature’s color, unripe 1722 struggle 463 jìng
When nature overcomes the struggling of its inhabitants, then calm and still conditions prevail, even if all too temporarily. [14 STROKES RANK 722]

1761 朝朝 dynasty  ten 6 morning 70 moon, month 1719 cháo
BF Chinese scholars often associate dynastic reigns with heavenly phenomena. Here, they compare the period of a dynasty with the pearly light you see early in the day (10 o’clock) with a more extended period of time, written as ‘month’. [12 STROKES RANK 593]

1762 潮潮 trendy, chic  water r 523 dynasty 1761 cháo
BF Trendiness is an elusive quality. It personifies what’s current (hence, the ‘water’ component) in the world of high fashion and also what is supposed to be superior, symbolized by the ‘dynasty’ component. [15 STROKES RANK 1302]

1763 脸脸 face, countenance  moon, month 1719 together, unanimous 1351 liǎn
A beautiful June night. Under the light of the full moon, the crowd looks up together to see the fireworks, which illuminate their collective faces. [11 STROKES RANK 615]

1764 哪哪 which* what* how*
mouth 41 which? what? how? 1727 nǎ
The ‘mouth’ emphasizes the vocal aspect to ‘which, what, and how’. [9 STROKES RANK 652]
1765 胜 胜 win victory, succeed, excel

By the light of the full moon, the ancient princess gave birth to a mighty prince, who won great victories for the Chinese people.  

[9 STROKES RANK 743]

1766 脚 脚 foot, leg, base

By the light of the moon, his tale sounded completely true, but thinking on it overnight, I realized he didn’t have a leg to stand on.  

[11 STROKES RANK 790]
Unit 72
August Moon

1767 胡 胡 beard, mustache ancient 51 moon, month 1799 hü
BF I look so ancient when the light of the moon isn’t good enough to shave off my beard and mustache.
[9 STROKES  RANK 806]

1768 湖 湖 lake water r 523 beard, mustache 1767 hü
By light of the full moon, the reflection of the surrounding mountains on the water in the lake looked like a huge beard.
[12 STROKES  RANK 918]

1769 糊 糊 paste, plaster rice 1127 beard, mustache 1767 hü
The shaggy workman was so busy plastering the new family room, he didn’t notice how the bits of splattered plaster looked like rice sprinkled in his beard.
[15 STROKES  RANK 1393]

1770 肯 肯 be willing or ready to stop! 181 meat 317 (altered) kěn
The screaming lady was really angry at me. I yelled at her to stop pounding me with the huge slab of meat, but she wasn’t willing to agree until I promised to paint her house, pick up her groceries, fix the toilet, and marry her daughter.
[8 STROKES  RANK 860]

1771 胞 胞 womb, sibling meat 317 (altered) wrap, envelope 857 bāo
BF The part of the body that enfolds and protects you during fetal development is the womb.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1341]
1772 阴 阴 feminine principle in nature  

The light of the moon shining gently on the rounded hills in the distance reminds any viewer of a woman’s breasts, putting them in mind of the feminine side of nature. [6 STROKES RANK 987]

1773 臂 臂 arm, upper arm  

BF The crescent moon is shaped like the upraised arm of a policeman getting ready to seize the crook and uphold the law. [17 STROKES RANK 1688]

1774 嘴 嘴 mouth, snout, bill  

How does this character differ in meaning from ‘mouth’ (§41)? Well, this kind of ‘mouth’ has more structure—it includes the bony and angular structures that belong to it. [16 STROKES RANK 1010]

1775 盟 盟 alliance, pact, league  

BF Opposing parties get together and use blood to clarify under bright light of day their relationships with each other. Thus is born an alliance between neighboring countries. [13 STROKES RANK 1163]

1776 触 触 touch, contact, strike  

The angry hive of bees chased me into a corner. I was deeply fearful of contact with them, as I am very allergic to their stings. [13 STROKES RANK 1207]

1777 衡 衡 weigh, measure  

BF The two halves of ‘firm, business’ are mirror images, more or less, of each other. They show equal weighing pans balanced at the ends of a big piece of horn. Scales used by businesses to weigh their goods look like this. [16 STROKES RANK 1340]
1778 胆 胆 bravery, audacity 月 moon, month 1719 毅 dawn 65 dān
Prince Charming demonstrates his bravery yet again. He’ll be in the Enchanted Forest from late night until dawn, his only companion the light of the full moon.

1779 腰 腰 waist 肉 meat 517 (altered) 西 west 291 (altered) 女 woman 581 yāo
Western standards for feminine beauty focus on a few body parts, including a slender waist.

1780 箭 箭 arrow* 竹 bamboo 243 前, 在前 of 1726 jiàn
In the hands of a master archer, the bamboo arrows swiftly fly in front of the advancing army.

1781 娜 娜 lithe, graceful 女 woman 581 哪? what? how? 1727 nuó
BF This particular woman is distinguished by her graceful athletic abilities.

1782 脉 脉 arteries and veins 肉 meat 317 (altered) 永, 永远 forever, always 560 mài
The right part looks like ‘water’ (§545), but altered a bit. After all, the arteries and veins are the parts of the body which channel the main fluid of the body, blood.

1783 铺 铺 spread, extend 金 gold 1327 刚 just now, only 1732 pū
The monument (§1732) is hard to see. They just covered it in gold leaf, and that extends the area of visibility many times over.
1784 朕 朕  royal ‘we’  
Heavenly bodies such as the moon form part a pronoun involving the Emperor. The ‘close’ part refers to the exclusivity of the Emperor; normally, access to his person was closed to the common citizen. The left ‘moon’ looks like an eye, and so this graph represents I when used by the Emperor, the royal ‘we’.

1785 腾 腾  gallop, prance  
BF You’re a horse honored to be able to carry the royal ‘we’. Would you do anything but prance and gallop in the expected manner?

1786 熊 熊  bear (animal)  
Ever throw a can into a bonfire? Nothing happens for a few minutes, and then there’s a sudden explosion as the inside pressure of the boiled stuff overcomes the strength of the can. Bears are like that. They look so big and cute, but internal passions seethe, and suddenly you’ve got a vicious, man-eating monster on your hands.

1787 肝 肝  liver  
The liver is the body part that drunks need to keep ‘dry’ if they don’t want to succumb to cirrhosis.

1788 肤 肤  skin  
BF The body part the handsome man likes best is his skin.

1789 肿 肿  to swell  
In the middle of the month, when the moon aligns with the earth in a certain way, extra high tides make the seas swell up.
1790 肚 肚  belly*, abdomen*  ᶥ meat 317 (altered)  ᶤ earth, soil 9  dù
 BF That fat man’s belly is the part of the body closest to the earth.
[7 STROKES  RANK 1800]

1791 膜 膜  membrane, film, thin coating  ᶥ meat 317 (altered)  ᶤ do not, not 349  mó
 BF A membrane is the body part that covers choice cuts of meat (steaks, chops) when an animal is freshly butchered. Do not eat this!
[14 STROKES  RANK 1945]

1792 晴 晴  clear, fine (of weather)  ᶥ day, sun 63  ᶤ nature’s color, unripe 1722  qíng
 By light of day, the green forest looks especially fine.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1968]
Unit 73
Righteous Anger

1793 义 义 harmonious crossing
CMP There’s something especially peaceful and graceful about this arrange-

ment when these curves are well drawn.

1794 义 义 justice, righteousness
BF In three well-placed strokes, you see someone rejoicing—hands raised in
thanks—giving to heaven—as justice triumphs over corruption and intolerance.
[3 STROKES  RANK 208]

1795 仪 仪 rites
BF There is an ancient trend among men and women: after achieving a just
victory, they display the urge to commemorate this occasion with special
religious rites.
[5 STROKES  RANK 1283]

1796 又 又 hand, also
This pictograph of a right hand (see the thumb and index finger pinch to-
gether on the left) represents the hand which, for most people, is the most,
uh, dexterous. The symbol for harmony, which resembles one closed fist,
reinforces the concept of dexterity.

What’s the connection with also? Your right hand is so accomplished
that you can easily perform a sequence of actions with barely a break in
between. Not only can you do one thing, but also the second, and also the
third, and so on.
[2 STROKES  RANK 126]
1797 对 对 correct, right  
手 hand, also 1796  
英寸 inch 210  

duì  

The hand we see belongs to a skilled draftsman, measuring each wall opening and fixture on the blueprint to the last fraction of an inch. If he does his job correctly the house will stand forever.  

[5 STROKES RANK 33]

1798 友 友 friend, associate  
手 moving hand 1635  
手 hand, also 1796  
you  

BF Hands, one supporting the other, is a charming visualization of the nature of friendship.  

[4 STROKES RANK 594]

1799 发 发 send out, deliver  
手 friend, associate 1798  
八 eight 1048  
fā  

You need to deliver your message to the world. Eight friends volunteer to be your emissaries.  

[5 STROKES RANK 47]

1800 取 取 take, get, obtain  
耳 ear 82  
手 hand, also 1796  
qǔ  

I take your ear with my hand and pull hard to get you to do what I want.  

[8 STROKES RANK 323]

1801 最 最 most, -est  
日 day, sun 63  
取 take, get, obtain 1800  
zuì  

You’re a greedy son of a gun. You always want the most of anything. Wherever the sun shines, you seem to feel that anything there is yours for the taking.  

[12 STROKES RANK 139]

1802 娶 娶 take a wife  
取 take, get, obtain 1800  
女 woman 581  
qǔ  

In the very unlamented old days, a man takes a wife by, uh, taking a woman.  

[11 STROKES RANK 2494]

1803 议 议 confer, discuss  
言 speech 615  
正义, righteousness 1794  
yì  

How do you determine a just system of government? Many speeches on the subject of justice contribute to conferences and discussions on that subject.  

[5 STROKES RANK 368]
One system of justice prevails over a society united by one language and culture.

Using a knife or other serious weapon on many members of a culture sounds like a genocidal massacre to me.

Let’s watch the dancing girl for a bit. Hands crossed in front of her, the horizontal stroke represents her shoulders, which must be kept even as she dances.

A malicious hand approaches the poor waiter carrying the tray of snacks on an even keel so they don’t fall. Why does he jostle the waiter so?

Imagine having to carry stuff on your head and shoulders carefully to get it across the river safe, sound, and dry. In the water, the main thing is to keep everything even, so nothing falls.

Two of the great hallmarks of civilization are clothes and language. The silken embroidery threads which decorate fine clothing and the patterns of written language suggest the patterns formed by veins of minerals in stone or the swirls in wood grain.
1810 艮 艮 tough, hard to chew
眼 78 (altered) 交 1793 (altered)  
You’ve just bitten something that’s very hard to chew. It’s so tough that you scrunched up your eye with the effort of biting down (explaining the altered ‘eye’). There’s no harmony here, which further explains the chopped up harmonious crossing.  
[6 STROKES  RANK 4564]

1811 很 很 very
left step 1034 交 1810  
That guy over there is the one they make jokes about—it’s very hard for him to chew gum and walk at the same time!  
[9 STROKES  RANK 138]

1812 父 父 father
右 1048 交 1793  
In theory, when a father does his job properly, the family experiences an abundance of harmony. But all too often, children and spouses ignore or flout his sage advice, resulting in plenty of tears for the besieged father. Here the dual dabs of ‘eight’ resemble the tears of bitterness that fathers can experience bringing their children to adulthood.  
[4 STROKES  RANK 589]

1813 爷 爷 grandpa
父 1812 交 113 (altered)  
BF A grandfather is like a father with additional emphasis on protection. If you compare this ‘protection’ with §113, you’ll notice that it’s missing its base. Grandfathers have to protect and defend more than one household, and they have no single home base.  
[6 STROKES  RANK 1007]

1814 交 交 meet, intersect
六 1062 交 1793  
A meeting place is where roads cross. Let’s meet for drinks after work, at six.  
[6 STROKES  RANK 320]

1815 咬 咬 bite, nip
目 41 交 1814  
When the horizontal parts of your mouth intersect with something in between, that’s a bite.  
[9 STROKES  RANK 1658]
1816 comparatively

Classic cars and their owners gather at meets to rate each other comparatively.

1817 school

Schools must have been one of the most important structures in the ancient Chinese world. In those days, a large interior space was created by leaning tall trees together across each side of the schoolhouse. These trees intersected and supported each other.

1818 to end, stop

You can stop the flow of water, harmoniously gurgling through the crossed pipes, by damming the drain with a wad of grass.
Unit 74
Quaint Histories

1819 哎 哎  hey!  
Hey, look at that guy! By plugging his lips into the hole in the dike, he used his mouth to stop the leak.

1820 杀 杀  kill  
To me, this character represents a view of one dead person’s face, the face of someone who’s been killed. The harmonious cross represents the closed eyes of the victim, the hooked vertical is the nose, and the other dabs look like creases in his face.

1821 刹 刹  to brake a car  
Metaphorically speaking, killing the motion of a car is the application of the knife edges of the brake mechanism.

1822 赵 赵  kingdom of Zhao  
The ancient kingdom of Zhao was one of the so-called Warring States that flourished 2200 years ago. As a result of its military prowess, it was possible for people to walk around in harmony with no fear of personal danger.

1823 希 希  hope  
Moving hands harmoniously crossed in supplication, covered by a special, embroidered towel—thus begins the ceremony of hope.
1824 稀稀 sparse
Too much hope at the conclusion of the grain harvest means the harvest was too sparse for everyone’s well-being.

1825 冈冈 mountain ridge
We’re looking down at a topographical map. Within the borders of the region are crossed strokes representing the spines of intersecting mountain ridges.

1826 刚刚 hard, firm, strong
The minerals and the topsoil of the mountain ridge are so firm and hard that we need a knife of some sort to dig through it.

1827 纲纲 guiding principle
Guiding principles were so important in traditional Chinese culture, that here we see two visual references to it. First of all is the silken thread which guides us and pulls us in the proper direction. Next are the mountain ridges which serve as paths for our intrepid traveler. One false step, and it’s curtains!

1828 网网 net
Within borders there are plenty of crisscrossing strands. That’s the design of an old-fashioned fishing net.

1829 区区 administrative division
The purpose of dividing a large country like China into a variety of administrative districts is to establish and maintain harmony within the box-like borders of the region.
**1830**

驱 驱  drive (carriage, horse)

BF To get to the division headquarters, I must drive my horse.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1511]

**1831**

凶 凶  fiendish, ferocious

Like Pandora’s box, this receptacle is open to the sky, and we see the how all the buoyant forces of harmony seems to be rising and escaping. What’s left? In the absence of harmony, fiendishness and ferocity thrive.

[4 STROKES  RANK 1378]

Here are three characters whose meanings may blend together in a student’s mind. How can we distinguish between冈, 区, and凶 (‘mountain ridge’, ‘administrative division’, and ‘fiendish’)? All three contain a cross within an open square.

The open part of the square suggests a means of escape for the character meaning. Mountain ridges are so heavy, they fall out the bottom. Ferocity is a boiling hot emotion, and the steam rises out the top. To flee a fiendish administrator, you flee to another district, alongside the old one.

**1832**

恼 恼  get mad

Sometimes things don’t go your way. Here’s one poor soul, whose heart is swollen in agitation. He’s trying to keep a cover on the feelings of ferocity that threaten to overcome him. In short, he’s getting mad.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1704]

**1833**

丈 丈  male elder relative

BF ‘Ten’ is an allusion to a high number or quantity. Here, it is a polite way to refer significant age. So, a harmony plus ten suggests the respect due to an older male relative.

[3 STROKES  RANK 1242]
1834 仗 仗  
**battle**

**BF** You see *two men*, but that’s all that would fit in the character. They symbolize a larger group of men that stand together, egging each other on, anticipating victory, as they prepare for *battle*.  

[5 STROKES  RANK 1712]

1835 史 史  
**history**

**BF** The *Middle Kingdom* (China) brought and maintained *harmony* in the Far East. That’s the region’s *history* in a nutshell.  

[5 STROKES  RANK 456]

1836 吏 吏  
**minor official**

**BF** *Minor officials* are the ones adding to the *historical* record, using their pens (which look like ‘*ones*’) to write stuff for future historians.  

[6 STROKES  RANK 2311]

1837 使 使  
**have sb do sth**

*Minor officials* are minor because almost any other *person* can come in to their office and **have them do something for them**.  

[8 STROKES  RANK 119]

1838 更 更  
**even more**

*History* has *twice* as many surprises as I expected. It’s even more interesting than I thought!  

[7 STROKES  RANK 221]

1839 便 便  
**cheap**

**BF** If stuff is *cheap*, then a *man* can buy even more of it!  

[9 STROKES  RANK 271]

1840 硬 硬  
**hard, stiff**

Consider a medium-sized *rock*. It’s hard to imagine anything *even more stiff* or *hard*, but if you could, this character would describe it.  

[12 STROKES  RANK 1170]
1841 鞭鞭 a whip  
A whip only uses a thin strip of animal hide, so it’s cheap.

1842 皮皮 leather, skin  
Here’s how to prepare the hide of an animal as leather. Carefully hang it over a cliff and use one hand to anchor it. Beat it with a big stick in your other hand to make it soft and supple.

1843 皱皱 wrinkle  
The older you get, the more wrinkles you display, and the more you are apt to attempt crackpot diets. My ‘favorite’ is the hay diet for smoother skin.

1844 被被 quilt, passive marker  
BF You use bits of old clothing and scraps of leather to create a quilt.

This character is most commonly encountered with the passive meaning ‘by’ (as in, the dog was bitten by the boy).
The only truly *worthy* subjects of the king could *handle* the king’s money.

(‘Subject’臣 is greatly altered so it will fit into the small space allotted to it.)

Recently, I was dreadfully *sick* and in the hospital. I recuperated—I guess—but the hospital food didn’t help. It was *tough* and *hard to chew*. I still bear the *marks* of my illness.

The *ferocious* bandit and his gang terrified the locals for decades. What a *change*, now that he’s in his *casket* and planted safely in the ground.

These banquets of *nobility* are no fun. The meat is *tough* and they measure their weak wine by the *inch*. Hands are constantly *raised high* in toast to the king, but the protocol is so fixed that guests feel like they are trapped in *nets.*
1849 辰辰 time, day, occasion  
- cliff r 671  - tough, hard to chew 1810 (altered)  
chén

An old-time procedure to improve the taste of food was to take tough meat and toss it over a cliff to tenderize it. It was always a memorable occasion when the tribal elders decided to employ this method.

[7 STROKES  RANK 2317]

1850 晨晨 morning, daybreak  
- day, sun 63  - time, day, occasion 1849  
chén

BF The time of day when you can see the sun peaking over the horizon marks the onset of daybreak.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1388]

1851 辱辱 disgrace, insult  
- time, day, occasion 1849  - inch 210  
rǔ

BF In ancient China, you could measure prestige by the amount of seating room allotted to you at special occasions. A minister given only an inch could mark this as a special sign of insult and disgrace, and he knew for sure his days in power were numbered.

[10 STROKES  RANK 1907]

1852 唇唇 lip  
- time, day, occasion 1849 (altered)  - mouth 41  
chún

BF Her lips were trembling on that special occasion when I proposed marriage. Her mouth opened in surprised pleasure—or was it amused contempt? (It was hard to tell!).

[10 STROKES  RANK 1880]

1853 坚坚 hard, solid  
- subject of a ruler 17 (altered)  - hand, also 1796  - earth, soil 9  
jiān

BF Bowing down, the loyal subject supports himself with his hands on the earth knowing that the surface will be hard and solid.

[7 STROKES  RANK 748]

1854 緊緊 tight, taut  
- subject of a ruler 17 (altered)  - hand, also 1796  - silk 206 (altered)  
jǐn

The king’s loyal subject is helping out today in the silk factories. Using his hands, he’s helping spin the silk thread by holding the strands taut and tight.

[10 STROKES  RANK 560]
and, in, on  

The ‘extra stuff’ in the character is like a link binding a hand to someone else, combining two people, that is, one person and another. We use this component to represent multiple positions.

degree, other small unit  

The new bull needs some serious taming before we can bring him inside the shelter. By degrees, under my hand, he starts behaving like a member of the family!

cross water, ferry across  

The river—creek, actually—is pretty narrow. I could cross it by swimming if the water wasn’t so cold (not many degrees).

poke, stir, turn  

Actions like stirring, poking, turning, and so forth are hand motions that have been sent out for a purpose.

absorb, suck up  

To use your mouth to suck up the coffee that spilled, you’ll need to place your lips in many different positions.

level, rank, grade  

Customers demand quality when they buy silk—after all, they’re paying a lot of money for it. Early on, it became important to sort silks by means of a standard grading system. Merchants show off the sorted silks in many different places in the store so they don’t get mixed up.
1861 极 极 extremely, extremity  

tree 375 and, in, on 1855 jí

That tall tree is perfect for the municipal Christmas tree—it’s extremely tall. We intensify its festive nature by placing ornaments in many different positions.

[7 STROKES RANK 363]

1862 报 报 newspaper

hand r 29 single ear 157 hand, also 1796 bào

Disregard the meaning of the ‘single ear’. What you see are two hands doing their best to support the unruly sheets of paper that comprise a full-sized newspaper. See how the paper towers above the hands and threatens to fall over the right hand.

[7 STROKES RANK 234]

1863 反 反 oppose, anti-

cliff r 671 hand, also 1796 făn

Your punishment for opposing the rebel army: you hang over the cliff by your hands until you either fall or manage to pull yourself up.

[4 STROKES RANK 237]

1864 版 版 edition, newspaper page

slice, flake 1485 oppose, anti- 1863 bàn

Stories on a newspaper page provide slices of life in opposition to our own. But since bad news sells better than good news, most stories emphasize tragedy and stories of opposition.

[8 STROKES RANK 810]

1865 变 变 transform, change into

trade, industry 1117 (altered) hand, also 1796 biàn

The hand of a strong executive or CEO can totally transform an industry. The industry here has been turned upside-down.

[8 STROKES RANK 225]
1866 受 受 receive

hands raised high 1345 smooth cover 280 hand, also 1796 shòu
The bottom-most hand belongs to the university president bestowing diplomas on graduation day. The body of students with hands raised high can’t wait to receive their diplomas, each in a protective smooth cover.
[8 STROKES RANK 238]

1867 授 授 instruct, teach

Effective teachers use hand motions and gestures to ensure the students receive their instruction.
[11 STROKES RANK 968]

1868 服 服 clothes, garment

moon, month 1719 single ear 157 hand, also 1796 fú
Think of a macabre Halloween costume as the garment we see here. The Demon Barber has slabs of meat and body parts like ears and hands dangling from his torso.
[8 STROKES RANK 365]

1869 权 权 right, power, authority

tree 375 hand, also 1796 quán
I know this tree is on your land, but I can approach it and put my hand on it because I have special authority.
[6 STROKES RANK 297]

1870 难 难 difficult, hard

hand, also 1796 short-tailed bird 992 nán
Ever try to use your hand to catch a bird? Don’t bother—it’s very hard to do.
[10 STROKES RANK 295]
When we get a cinder in our eye, it’s pretty painful, but think how things are for giants. Instead of cinders, they get eye-shaped almonds, tough as nails, that float on their eyeballs, making life temporarily unbearable for them.

I was tired of the tough, hard to chew food that my evil stepmother kept feeding me. One day, I approached her as I could and spit a mouthful at her. I hit her in the ear. I thought she would kill me.

Imagine you’re a prisoner in some third-world dictatorship. Everything they feed you is tough and hard to chew. But on the ruler’s birthday, the meat is a little bit better quality. By comparison with the normal fare, how fine it seems!

Bustling towns and big cities attract young men because they are fine places to live with lots to do and many other young people to meet.
1875 狼 狼 wolf 
Dogs and wolves are clearly close relatives. Somehow, although wild dogs always seem somewhat mangy, wolves always seem to retain their natural grace, majesty, and fineness.

1876 限 限 set a limit, restrict 
Well-trained soldiers can do anything, but there are restrictions. For example, the rocky hills limit the distance they can march, and the toughness of their rations limits their energy and stamina.

1877 狠 狠 ruthless, relentless 
I’ve never seen a dog too full to go after food. No matter how tough the piece of meat might be, the dog is relentless, and never lets go.

1878 恨 恨 hate 
Hatred is a tough and all-consuming emotion.

1879 根 根 plant roots 
No part of an ornamental tree makes good eating, but in times of famine you do the best you can. Moreover, no part of a tree is chewable, but the plant roots of the tree are tough, but chewable.

1880 跟 跟 with, follow 
Somehow the soldier got a tough nut in his boot, lodged against a sensitive part of his foot, but the pace of marching is too swift for him to stop and remove it. The painful nut travels with him for the duration of the maneuvers.

1881 銀 銀 silver 
Gold has the reputation for being a soft, malleable metal. If you want a tougher precious metal, you’ll need to invest in silver.
1882 既 既  already, then
\[\text{tough, hard to chew 1810 (altered)}\]
\[\text{un-, -less 1642 (altered)}\]
ji

Unless I get help soon, that tough piece of food I recklessly ate has already made me deathly ill.

1883 观 观  look at, watch, observe
\[\text{hand, also 1796}\]
\[\text{see 301}\]
guān

If you hold that exquisitely carved statuette in your hand, you can also see it close up, and better observe all its superior qualities.

1884 支 支  prop up, support
\[\text{ten 6}\]
\[\text{hand, also 1796}\]
zhī

Someone’s hand is balancing the ten-pound weight, trying to support it.

1885 技 技  skill, ability
\[\text{hand r 29}\]
\[\text{prop up, support 1884}\]
jì

The juggler uses his hand to support several balls in the air at once. What skill!

1886 枝 枝  branch of tree
\[\text{tree 375}\]
\[\text{prop up, support 1884}\]
zhī

Trees support their branches.

1887 鼓 鼓  drum, rouse
\[\text{ten 6}\]
\[\text{bean 1168}\]
\[\text{prop up, support 1884}\]
gǔ

I just managed to prop up ten beans on the window sill. Suddenly, a mighty clap of sound rent the air, scattering the beans to kingdom come. Someone had just beat their drum as loud as they could.

1888 仅仅  barely, merely
\[\text{man r 953}\]
\[\text{hand, also 1796}\]
jiān

Think back to ancient days. Without the use of machines, relying only on the power provided by hands and feet, men and women could barely survive.

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1889 双 双 pair, both, dual
To do most things well, use both hands.

1890 祭 祭 offer sacrifice
Priests offer sacrifice to their gods in a ritualized ceremony. They place a slab of meat on the altar using their hands, hoping that patterns in the burns will show them hidden knowledge.

1891 察 察 inspect, scrutinize
BF Better bring the sacrificial offering in from the sun, under the roof of the temple so the priest can carefully scrutinize it away from prying eyes.

1892 擦 擦 rub, scrape
The priest uses his hand on the burnt offering to scrutinize it and scrape or rub away some of the soot to see what messages have been sent to him from heaven.

1893 坡 坡 slope, plain
The ground is covered by a large sheet of leather. Because of natural imperfections in the leather and in the soil, it’s not exactly straight and level—it’s sloped.

1894 玻 玻 glass
BF In olden days, windows and containers of the peasantry were made of animal skins. Finally, they invented glass, quite expensively at first, which performed the same services for the king.

1895 波 波 wave, ripple of water
BF They wash the old leather cape by beating it in the water. They beat it with such energy as to create huge waves and ripples.
婆 婆  old woman, matron, mother-in-law

波 波  wave, ripple of water

Who’s the woman so good at making waves in my house? Why, it’s my mother-in-law, who else?!
Unit 77
Categorical Imperatives

1897 疲疲 tired, weary
- sick 697
- leather, skin 1842
BF The old doctor has had it with patients! He is so weary of treating sick and leathery people who never stop complaining and are slow to pay their bills.
[10 STROKES RANK 1778]

1898 彼彼 other party, that, those
- left step 1034
- leather, skin 1842
BF I hate dancing at parties. My left foot somehow always lands on the leather shoe of my partner’s foot. After awhile, no other party will dance with me. As a result, I need to leave and find some other party to have fun at.
[8 STROKES RANK 1256]

1899 颇颇 slanting, tilting
- leather, skin 1842
- page, leaf 444
BF Look at the old boxer. The back of his head is tough and leathery, so stiff that he can’t raise his head fully. The back of his neck is always slanting.
[11 STROKES RANK 1560]

1900 破破 broken, damaged
- stone, rock 1386
- leather, skin 1842
BF The giant alligator swallowed a giant stone at some point. When trappers caught him, killed him, and skinned him, the dried skin could no longer support the rock, which burst through and damaged the skin.
[10 STROKES RANK 604]
1901  夜  夜  night, evening

What can a man do under cover of night? Harmonious, peaceful things actually, nighttime and sleepy time things.

1902  脑  脑  brain

The brain is the body part where, according to shrinks everywhere, lie everybody’s most fiendish and ferocious thoughts. We learn to cover all this ugliness or else no one could ever live with anyone else.

1903  假  假  fake, phony, false

A man wearing a second skin is a powerful metaphor for falseness.

1904  急  急  impatient, anxious

Too much stuff going on engenders emotions in sensitive people, typically those of impatience and anxiety.

1905  食  食  eat*

Putting something good and fine within a person is the same as giving them something to eat.

1906  汉  汉  ethnic Chinese

Historians are now confident that extensive systems of water connections and manual dexterity are key to the development of any civilization, especially the ethnic Chinese.

1907  树  树  tree*

It’s correct to think of a tree as a tree.
1908 欢 欢  happy, pleased  
BF I use my hand to finally pay off the loan I owe. I don’t know who’s happier—me, for getting the monkey off my back, or my pal, who gets his money back.

1909 怪 怪  surprising, strange
Hearts and hands are raining down on the earth. Whoa, how strange!

1910 概 概  approximate, general
BF The tree already fell on the forest ranger when I got there. I was approximately two minutes too late!

1911 释 释  set free, explain
BF The police have rounded up a crowd of troublemakers. Who of them should we set free? We distinguish the innocent from the guilty in an odd way, which seems to work somehow. The ones with their hands on the earth are so bewildered that they must be innocent.

1912 曼 曼  handsome, graceful
BF The brave soldier, demonstrating perfect fighting skills with his hands, impressed us as being very handsome and graceful.

1913 漫 漫  brim over, overflow
He gracefully lowered his hand into the tub of water, but no matter how graceful, it still made the tub overflow.
1914 慢 慢 slow  
Handsome men usually made her heart beat fast, but this guy was so rude, selfish, and ignorant, that he actually made her heart slow down.  
[14 STROKES RANK 822]

1915 欧 欧 Europe  
Europe, a bunch of administrative divisions formerly called countries, lack so many skills and resources that each can’t make it on its own.  
[8 STROKES RANK 823]

1916 娘 娘 mum, mother  
My mother was the best woman that ever lived.  
[10 STROKES RANK 881]

1917 板 板 board, plank  
You cut planks from a tree. You use the planks of a political platform to oppose the money-grubbing incumbent.  
[8 STROKES RANK 930]

1918 叔 叔 uncle  
When I was small, I used to climb on top of my uncle. What fun—and he also enjoyed it.  
[8 STROKES RANK 1422]

1919 督 督 supervise  
BF My uncle entered the family business many years ago, and did well despite family ties. He stood eagle-eyed in the factory, supervising all aspects of the operation.  
[13 STROKES RANK 946]

1920 择 择 choose*, select*  
BF All kinds of good stuff gets scattered on the soil. Selectively, I use both hands to pick up the best garbage from the earth.  
[8 STROKES RANK 961]
1921 译 译 translate, interpret
speech r 615  hand, also 1796  earth, soil 9 (altered)  yì

I opened my mouth to speak, and the hostile strangers used their hands to throw soil at me. You don’t need an interpreter to figure their intentions.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1198]

1922 泽 泽 marsh
water r 523  hand, also 1796  earth, soil 9 (altered)  zé

BF This godforsaken marsh is a slimy mixture of water and soil. It’s not made for humans—my limbs are not very handy.

[8 STROKES  RANK 951]
Unit 78
Shadowy Realms

1923 圣圣 sage, saint
**BF** The sage man, *arms* crossed in front, rises above the *earth* towards heaven, as reward for his saintliness.

1924 戏戏 drama, play, show
**BF** The renegade samurai warrior is stealing the *show*. That’s because he’s the one with the *sword* in his *hand*, and no one wants to make him angry.

1925 隐隐 conceal, hide, latent
**BF** Blackbeard the Pirate is *anxious* to get back to the *hills*, for that’s where his buried treasure lies hidden.

1926 稳稳 settled, steady, stable
Careful—the cup of *rice* is filled to the top. If you are *anxious* or *impatient* while carrying, you won’t hold it steady, and the rice will get all over the floor.

1927 趣趣 interesting, to interest
**BF** That new item in the store window interests me quite a lot. I’ll do whatever walking I have to do to get it.
1928 努 努 slave, enslave  奴 woman 雨 hand, also 1796 努 nú

BF Men put their hands onto women to make them slaves in traditional and ancient societies.

1929 努 努 exert, strive  努 slave, enslave 1928 努 strength 1492 努 nū

BF Masters exhorted their slaves to use their utmost strength—to exert themselves.

1930 震 震 shake, quake  震 rain 85 力 time, day, occasion 1849 震 zhèn

It’s a memorable occasion whenever the rain pours down in sheets. Even though it’s only rain, the earth seems to shake from the torrential onslaught.

1931 振 振 rouse, shake, vibrate

Normally, I was never allowed to disturb my father during his naps. But on this occasion, when my mother fell down drunk in front of the neighbors, I used my hand to rouse him from his sleep.

1932 缓 缓 unhurried, delay, postpone  缓 silk r 807 力 receive 1866 (altered) 力 moving hand 1635 缓 huān

With my fancy silk duds on, I receive every one’s honor and praise. Through it all, my hand moves slowly and unhurriedly, as befits someone as elegant as I.

1933 援 援 help, aid, assist  助 hand r 29 助 receive 1866 (altered) 助 moving hand 1655 援 yuán

BF Two hands working together, so the poor victim will receive the best possible aid and assistance.
1934 暖 暖 warm, genial

As I wave my hand in the air, it receives the beneficial rays of the sun. It feels so warm and pleasant.

1935 怒 怒 become angry, indignant

The slave is indignant at having to live as a slave.

1936 浪 浪 wave, breaker

Nothing is finer than the raw energy of watery breakers pounding the beach. The structure of waves is impossibly complex, in line with the way this character is drawn.

1937 轰 轰 bang, boom

The backfire of a car. Two hands clapping. That’s the kind of booming or banging this character represents.

1938 朗 朗 clear*, bright*

A perfect moon makes the evening clear and bright as day.

1939 叹 叹 sigh, exclaim

BF I rest my chin—along with my mouth—on my hand and breathe a great sigh of grief.

1940 粮 粮 grain, food, provisions

Rice makes mighty fine provisions.
1941 聚聚 assemble, gather, get together

We’re all getting together on that pretty island in the bay. The friendly boatman takes everybody across the water to get there.

[14 STROKES  RANK 1306]

1942 叙叙 talk, chat, narrate

Now that work is finished, and we have surplus time on our hands, we can relax, chat a bit, and bring ourselves up to date.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1607]

1943 泛泛 float, suffused with, non-specific

BF I exercise in the water every day, but today I am just so tired that I’ll just float calmly along instead.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1327]

1944 胸胸 chest, bosom, thorax

Imagine wrapping all your fiendish inclinations in a piece of meat. Put it away in a chest and forget about it.

[10 STROKES  RANK 1356]

1945 废废 useless, superfluous

BF Siege of Leningrad, winter 1943. We had to send him out of the shelter. He was superfluous, not pulling his own weight, threatening death to the rest of us.

[8 STROKES  RANK 1376]

1946 鸡鸡 chicken

Chicken is a hand-raised bird.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1391]

1947 聂聂 whisper

I cup my hands to my ears to better hear what he said—for some reason, he insisted on whispering.

[10 STROKES  RANK 2797]
If I whisper instead of yelling, the student is more apt to absorb what I’m saying. But a whack with my hand is the best way of all to keep their attention.
1949 液 液 liquid, fluid | water 523 | night, evening 1901 | yè

BF Somehow, during the night, watery liquid—dew—appears on plants, flowers, and grass.

[11 STROKES RANK 1451]

1950 餐 餐 eat, meal | eat* 1905 | evil, vicious 657 (altered) | hand, also 1796 | cān

BF Evil things and wild beasts are subdued by the hands of hunters to provide meals for city folk.

[16 STROKES RANK 1465]

1951 拔 拔 uproot, pull out | hand 29 | send out, deliver 1799 | bà

There’s a hand on the left and also a hand (see §1796) on the right. They’re both tugging on the tree- or plant-like thing between them, trying to uproot it.

[8 STROKES RANK 1502]

1952 驶 驶 sail, (vehicle) moves quickly | horse 878 | history 1835 | shǐ

Look at that horse go! Wow, it moves so fast, it’s history!

[8 STROKES RANK 1520]

1953 桑 桑 mulberry tree | hand, also (times 3) 1796 | tree 375 | sāng

BF The mulberry is a messy tree. It’s prolific with its berries, many of which drop off and need picking up before they stain walkways. Many hands are needed for the harvesting and cleaning.

[10 STROKES RANK 1528]
1954 剂 剂 dose (medical) 
BF Time to take your pills. Unfortunately, each pill contains several doses. Use a sharp knife to carefully cut each pill into pieces, and be extra careful to make each piece even, or else the dosage will vary unacceptably.  
[8 STROKES RANK 1546]

1955 劝 劝 exhort, urge, persuade 
Urgent hand movements, coupled with great strength of character, endeavor to persuade you to buy the new product.  
[4 STROKES RANK 1562]

1956 钢 钢 steel 
The early view of steel was as a precious metal discovered mysteriously near the ridges of mountains.  
[9 STROKES RANK 1609]

1957 岗 岗 mound 
The squished ‘mountain’ on top together with ‘ridge’ emphasizes the mound-ness of the resulting character.  
[7 STROKES RANK 1795]

1958 邓 邓 surname of Deng Xiaoping 
Deng Xiaoping is a famous 20-century Chinese leader, through whose influence and abilities town economies thrived. The entire country became more active in economic activities, which is what ‘hand’ symbolizes.  
[4 STROKES RANK 1614]

1959 艰 艰 difficult, arduous 
BF Something tough for your hands is an arduous task.  
[8 STROKES RANK 1647]
1960 寂 寂 lonely, quiet

BF My lonely uncle spent his entire life under a single roof, never ever moving to a new house. Something about him was not quite right...

[11 STROKES  RANK 1739]

1961 叛 叛 betray, rebel, revolt

BF The slaughterers have a trained running sheep to cause the herd to march quietly to slaughter. I oppose such tactics, which use a sheep to betray her comrades.

[9 STROKES  RANK 1779]

1962 久 久 step forward

CMP A young man walks steadily and with purpose. As he takes each step forward, his hands swing back and forth. The arc of the swing is the action path.

Sometimes, this component appears in a slightly altered form: 久.

1963 傻 傻 muddleheaded

A muddleheaded man just stands there while his fiendish older brother steps towards him with a knife (see that little ‘dab’ at the top?). Here’s a dysfunctional family at work...

[13 STROKES  RANK 1989]

1964 陵 陵 mausoleum, mound

BF An abundant pile of earth is a poetic description of a mound. Located in the scenic hills outside of town, we step forward there solemnly to pay our respects to the leaders of the country.

[10 STROKES  RANK 1965]
1965 俊 俊 handsome*

The handsome young man gets ready to step forward along the boulevard. His full length portrait appears on the left of this character. The right zooms on his noble, Grecian nose, and the stylish mustache below. Here, of course, we make a visual correspondence between his nose and mustache and ‘permit, allow’. (Refer again to §771 for the connection between ‘permit’ and ‘nose’).

[9 STROKES  RANK 1847]

1966 蜂 蜂 bee, wasp insect 890 step forward 1962 plentiful 12 fēng

Bees and wasps are known for their swarming behavior, in which a plentiful supply of the insects act together as they move forward.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1912]

1967 锋 锋 sword’s cutting edge gold 1327 step forward 1962 plentiful 12 fēng

BF With a sword’s cutting edge made of precious metal, the samurai steps forward and skewers three of the attackers with a single thrust (‘plentiful’ is equivalent to three at one blow).

[12 STROKES  RANK 1671]

1968 复 复 turn around, repeat size range 163 (altered) step forward 1962 fù

BF After you step forward through a series of different dance steps, you repeat everything all over again until the music stops.

[9 STROKES  RANK 426]

1969 腹 腹 belly, abdomen meat 317 (altered) turn around, repeat 1968 fù

BF In cows and other ruminants, the stomach is the part of the body where grass is digested over and over again.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1589]
1970覆覆 overturn, cover

The sun was about to set in the west, so it was almost dark. I took a step to the left, for some reason turned around, and so managed to overturn some jars of new wine which were fermenting.

[18 STROKES  RANK 1823]

1971履履 shoe*

BF Until the day we become a corpse, we are condemned to walk forever, taking step after step, repeatedly, in one pair of shoes or another.

[15 STROKES  RANK 1802]

1972处处 get along with sb

There’s one reason why this guy always seems to move forward in life. It’s as if he can foretell personalities which enable him to get along with everybody.

[5 STROKES  RANK 206]

1973冬冬 winter

Here’s a person moving forward, but at twice their normal speed. Why? It’s winter, and they want to keep warm.

[5 STROKES  RANK 1384]

1974图图 picture, chart, map

Winter time, and the ground is frozen and covered with a permanent layer of snow. We can use this surface to scratch out pictures and maps. It’s probably best to imagine that the enclosing square is really a picture frame.

[8 STROKES  RANK 476]
Unit 80
Step by Step

1975 疼疼 it hurts!
Whatever it is that makes you sick, winter makes it worse. Oh, how it hurts!
[t10 STROKES RANK 1710]

1976 终终 end, finish
The weavers spin the silk thread during wintertime. They finish this task in time for the start of spring.
[8 STROKES RANK 558]

1977 窗窗 window
There’s a hole in the room’s wall. It’s little. It forms a rectangular enclosure, and through it you can see people walking. It’s a window!
[12 STROKES RANK 1074]

1978 夏夏 summer
Everything slows down in the summer. Even the hot breezes blowing the leaves forward, do it slowly. The abbreviated form of ‘leaf’ accentuates this slowness.
[10 STROKES RANK 1126]

1979 麦麦 wheat
The scholar sees wheat as one of the primary reasons that civilization makes progress (isn’t that what ‘stepping forward’ is all about?), especially when this resource is plentiful. But a more casual interpretation hinges on wheat’s use to make flour, and hence bread. The top of this character shows layers of bread, skewered with a cocktail toothpick, and resting on an artsy cocktail table.
[7 STROKES RANK 1171]
1980 酸 酸  
sour, tart
新酒 303  同意, 允许 771  step forward 1062
I allowed myself to sample some of that new wine I bought, but it was awful! It made my stomach rumble and feel like it was taking several steps forward. Worst of all, it tasted very sour.
[14 STROKES  RANK 1456]

1981 峰 峰  
peak, summit
山 21  step forward 1062  丰富 12
When you’ve stepped forward as many times as you could while climbing the mountain, you find you can’t go up anymore. You’ve reached the peak.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1473]

1982 凌 凌  
thick ice
冰 r 569  土, 地 9  行走的人 287  step forward 1062
The ice is so thick that a man walks on the ice as confidently as if he were stepping forward on real soil.
[10 STROKES  RANK 1731]

1983 支 支  
tap, rap
Look carefully—there’s the hammer coming down to tap, tap, tap on the small table.

1984 敲 敲  
to strike, beat
高 275  tap, rap 1083
This how you knock on a door—select a high spot, and then tap until someone opens up.
[14 STROKES  RANK 1732]

1985 叟 叟  
old gentleman
敲门 1083  (altered)  言 64  (altered)
BF This sketch of a man emphasizes the boniness typical of an old gentleman.
[9 STROKES  RANK 3804]

1986 搜 搜  
search, collect
手 r 29  old gentleman 1085
The old gentlemen uses his hand to search for things since his eyesight has pretty much gone now.
[12 STROKES  RANK 1564]
1987 瘦 瘦 thin, lean

The old gentlemen became ill from working too hard. We could all tell, because he steadily lost weight to become thin and lean.

[14 STROKES RANK 1841]

1988 艘 艘 m for ships and vessels

The old gentleman on the boat is a scary sight. He counts his steps on the boat since his vision has become so poor.

[15 STROKES RANK 1470]

1989 文 文 wallop

CMP Most of the time, the ‘tap’ component of §1983 appears in a simpler form like this, where you see the head of the hammer protruding below as part of the strike. This component confers an interpretation of action, or attack, or strike.

1990 攻 攻 to assault, attack

An attack is a wallop of such intensity that it involves work on the part of the invader.

[7 STROKES RANK 588]

1991 玫 玫 rose

BF How childish—the king is walloping his courtiers with a bunch of blood-red, long stem roses. It seems silly, but those thorns do hurt.

[8 STROKES RANK 2303]

1992 政 政 government, political

BF Government regulations can come down hard. Government ideas of correct behavior often wallop the heads and wallets of its citizens.

[9 STROKES RANK 150]
1993 風 風 reason, cause 51 ancient 51 wallop 1989 gù
BF Oops—is it my fault that my hammer caught the ancient, irreplaceable, and priceless vase with a mighty wallop? I guess that’s the reason I’ve never been invited back. [9 STROKES RANK 572]

1994 做 做 do, make 953 man r 953 reason, cause 1993 zuò
Men with a passionate cause find inspiration to make great efforts to achieve their goals. [11 STROKES RANK 246]

1995 敵 敵 enemy, foe 225 tongue 225 wallop 1989 dí
BF Irresponsible rumor-mongering with your tongue packs as mighty a wallop as any weapon. It’s easy for gossips and slanderers to make enemies. [10 STROKES RANK 523]

1996 牧 牧 herd 186 ox 186 wallop 1989 mù
BF Normally, oxen are placid and content. But crowded conditions in a herd can cause oxen to wallop and even gore each other. [8 STROKES RANK 1580]

1997 收 收 receive, accept 92 speak up! 92 wallop 1989 shōu
The homeowner is hard of hearing. “Speak up!” he yells to the mailman furiously walloping the door so the deaf guy can accept the package. [6 STROKES RANK 351]

1998 敗 敗 lose, be defeated 430 cowrie 430 wallop 1989 bài
Who would think! With shells as weapons, the enemy pounded our troops mercilessly, and we were defeated. [8 STROKES RANK 862]

1999 敢 敢 to dare 82 unexpected stroke 82 ear 82 wallop 1989 gǎn
To listen with your ear to the call of an unexpected challenge, to strike while the iron is hot—such behavior is to accept a dare. [11 STROKES RANK 795]
The beginning Chinese student tried on the right to imitate the form on the left. His intentions and goals failed to intersect, and he got a wallop on his ear as punishment.
Unit 81

Poise

2001 教 teach
In the old days, teachers were brutal. Students sat in the classroom out of a sense of filial duty, even though the teacher did nothing but wallop them for any and no reason. That was old-fashioned teaching. [11 STROKES RANK 191]

2002 敦 sincere
Sincere feelings are those free from pretense or deceit. Perhaps the ancient scribes associated these feelings with children who simply uncover their mouths and say what they think. Sincere comments are so unusual in polite society that they hit the listener with great force. [12 STROKES RANK 1722]

2003 攸 distant, far
An ancient Chinese game of golf (or the equivalent). One player gives his golf ball, here shown in the form of a small vertical stroke, a mighty wallop. How far it travels!
[7 STROKES RANK 3416]

2004 敕 imperial edict
For many people, even the best laws are wallops against individual liberty. In this viewpoint, an imperial edict is a bunch of liberty-constraining blows...
[11 STROKES RANK 3435]
2005 整 整 neat, tidy
...But if you follow those imperial edicts to the letter, and if you follow them correctly, then your life proceeds in a neat and tidy manner.

2006 数 数 number, figure
To overcome your troubles, imagine walloping them hard, so hard they shatter into a huge number of harmless fragments.

2007 放 放 put, place
Think of a board game like shuffleboard. When you wallop the puck, it travels in a certain direction. With a little luck and a modicum of skill, you place it in the proper square.

2008 敖 敖 ramble
On a nice spring morning, I prepare for a nice rambling walk by exiting my house without any thoughts of where I’m going to put my feet.

2009 傲 傲 proud, haughty
No one tells this haughty man what to do! For example, when he takes a walk, he rambles wherever he wants.

2010 枚 枚 m for coins, small objects
As you wallop the tree hard, lots of small objects (acorns?) tumble down.

2011 敏 敏 sharp, keen
Keenness of mind is like sharpness in a blade. You maintain and enhance the sharpness with every blow of the smith’s hammer.
2012 繁 繁 complicated sharp, keen silk r 807 (altered) fán
BF High quality embroidery earns its reputation on the basis of the stitches of the complicated pattern it shows. These patterns remain sharp and the fabric must be silk. [17 STROKES RANK 1296]

2013 激 激 surge, dash water r 523 white 201 put, place 207 (altered) jī
The mighty waves of water surging against the rocky coast of Maine personify nature’s power. White with foam, they pound the same place over and over. [16 STROKES RANK 710]

2014 缴 缴 pay, hand over silk r 807 white 201 put, place 207 (altered) jiǎo
Squares of white silk, so we may imagine, served as currency in the very old days, because they were valuable items and yet convenient to carry. We place one of these cloths on the counter in order to pay for something. [16 STROKES RANK 1834]

2015 各 各 each, every wallop 1989 (altered) mouth 41 gè
The bully walloped that guy in the head so hard that each and every tooth in his mouth rattled. [6 STROKES RANK 209]

2016 客 客 visitor, guest roof 247 each, every kè
Each and every person who stays under our roof as a guest merits the full range of our hospitality. [9 STROKES RANK 583]

2017 洛 洛 a certain river water r 523 each, every luò
BF Each and every drop of water that nature recycles finds itself in a certain river at some point. [9 STROKES RANK 978]
2018 落落 fall, drop behind  草 r 94 河流 r 2017 luò
The villagers regularly dump their grass clippings in the nearby river after they mow their lawns. The swiftness of the current grabs hold and whisks it out of sight, leaving the villagers behind. [12 STROKES RANK 496]

2019 落落 enmesh, wind  丝 r 807 每个, 每一个 2015 luò
We’re touring the silk factory. Be careful! For all their thinness and fineness, each and every silk thread can enmesh you in a trap from which you can’t escape without damaging hundreds of dollars of merchandise. [9 STROKES RANK 1118]

2020 格格 lattice, grid  树 r 375 每个, 每一个 2015 gé
In a lattice, each and every component square is identical to every other, and they are all made of wood. [10 STROKES RANK 325]

2021 落路 road, path, way  脚 r 946 每个, 每一个 2015 lù
To get somewhere, you put each and every footstep on the right path. [13 STROKES RANK 305]

2022 条条 strip, sth long and narrow  棒打 1989 (altered) 树 375 (altered) tiáo
BF Go ahead—really wallop that tree! Lots of branches—long and narrow pieces of the tree—will fall all around you. [7 STROKES RANK 214]

2023 务务 affair, business matter  棒打 1989 (altered) 力 1492 wù
BF It’s trite—but true, nevertheless—to compare business matters with athletic competitions. To succeed, you need to wallop your competitors with great strength. [5 STROKES RANK 245]
Walking home, the cold autumn wind tirelessly hammered me down. It felt like each and every blown leaf battered my forehead.

A real hot business deal is in the works—so hot that when it rains, it sizzles. The steaming vapor forms clouds of fog and mist.

We’ve captured one of the terrorists from the group who kidnapped my wife. We desperately want to rescue her, but the terrorist has resisted our entreaties. We’re going to apply a few wallops to him to see if it will loosen his tongue.
Everyone loves the spring, except perhaps the farmer. Farmers work furiously to prepare their fields for planting. Weeding, hoeing, aerating the soil, and so on are necessary steps which do great violence to the soil, symbolically a ‘walloping’ to the field.

You can always tell a professional boxer. Over the years, he himself will have received so many wallops that his appearance will be greatly changed.

I wallop that stubborn little donkey until he’s ready to obey me, and then I send it with an important message to deliver.

The American dollar just isn’t what it used to be. Foreign economies are walloping it. Moreover, the American economy is left stepping into a mountain of debt. Result—the purchasing power of the dollar is a tiny fraction of what it used to be.
2031 thus, that which man 311 scepter 5 wallop 1899 yōu Phrases like ‘thus’ or ‘that which’ often introduce factors that cause results to happen.

The man takes a stick and wallops a few heads to make sure these people do what he wants.

2032 embellish, decorate thus, that which 2031 (altered) feathers 1285 xiū The colorful feathers on the club I used to get my own way serve as useful decoration, for they hide my aggressive nature.

2033 respect, offer politely thoughtless, careless 653 wallop 1899 jìng He felt great shame at the way he thoughtlessly walloped his teacher in the face, even though it was an accident. Thereafter, he never failed to respect this great master to try compensate for this careless insult.

2034 warn, alert respect, offer politely 2033 speech 270 jǐng The thug spoke politely to the shopkeeper, but no one was fooled. It was really a warning. Pay up, or the store gets torched.

2035 surrender, capitulate hills 735 wallop 1899 (altered) fort xiáng We swarmed down from the hills, giving their forts a real walloping. They had no choice but to surrender.

2036 prosperous, booming surrender, capitulate 2035 (altered) give birth to 191 lóng After the Japanese surrender in 1945, the United States embarked on a program to cause the rebirth of the Japanese economy. This successful program led to wildly prosperous times for this country.
略 略 summary, outline  
BF Here’s a summary, a brief outline of the farmer’s business strategy. See that field? Well, he aims to plant as much as he can in that one and in each and every other one he owns.

露 露 dew  
BF Was it raining overnight? The road is moist. But no—it’s just a heavy dew.

散 散 break up, distribute  
The contented cow is not going to be contented for much longer. With a mighty wallop from a cleaver, the slaughterer will soon be able to take various cuts of meat and distribute them to customers near and far.

撒 撒 scatter, sprinkle  
You’ve broken up the stale bread you brought with you to the park, and you use your hand to scatter it to the ducks who wait impatiently for this tasty snack.

阁 阁 pavilion, chamber  
BF Each and every door to the emperor’s palace deliberately looked the same as every other one. Thieves and saboteurs would have a more difficult time determining the whereabouts of the emperor’s private chambers.

乙 乙 whole arm  
CMP The curve on the right strongly resembles an entire arm, the ‘corner’ of the curve representing the elbow. (In fact, this character did stand for ‘elbow’ in former times.) The horizontal top shows a bit of shoulder, to emphasize the bodily resemblance.
2043 飞飞 to fly
飞 shows an early attempt at flying. Some enterprising inventor attached wings to his arms, and flapped away! [3 STROKES RANK 347]

2044 艺艺 skill, art
BF An intricately woven tapestry of strands of grass, draped over some one’s whole arm, shows off their great skill. [4 STROKES RANK 786]

2045 忆忆 recall, remember
BF Here’s a display of cooperation between the emotional side of a person and their physical side, represented by their whole arm. Remembering shows this cooperation. [4 STROKES RANK 1333]

2046 九九 nine
How many common body parts comprise the mechanism of the whole arm? Let’s see, there’s the shoulder, the upper arm, the forearm, wrist, palm, and five fingers. That’s ten. But the action path through the shoulder is like the ‘forbid’ symbol—it crosses out the shoulder. As a result, this is a schematic of nine parts of the arm system. [2 STROKES RANK 445]

2047 瓦瓦 tile
An eccentric mason places a tile in the ceiling. Holding it in place with his whole arm, he forces grout between adjacent tiles with an odd-looking spoon. [4 STROKES RANK 1195]

2048 仇仇 hatred
The man on the right is using all nine parts of his arm to pound and beat the man on the left. Great hatred accounts for this aggression. [4 STROKES RANK 1536]
2049 杂  
mixed, composite

A complicated recipe calls for *nine* ingredients, each of which appears in a *small* amount. They come together to make *one* dish. This delicious dish is an inspired *mixture*.

2050 执  
grasp

Here’s a *hand* holding *nine things* tightly. It’s *grasping* these *things*.

2051 几  
several, how many?

BF Lunch is over—time to get back to work. This big bruise is ready to carry *several* heavy machine components at a time, cradled in his massive *arms*. That’s *action* on the factory floor.

2052 机  
machine

BF Wood from *trees* was an early—the earliest?—high-tech building material. *How many machines* and other tools could we construct from this material? The answer is limited only by your imagination.
Unit 83

A Musical Comedy Administration

2053 古古 ancient bamboo spear
BF Tools extend the capability of a naked and unarmed mortal. An ancient bamboo spear must have seemed the epitome of technological wonder, extending the power of one skilled warrior to be like that of several hands acting all at once.

2054 没没 have not
Water on a wooden spear has no benefit. It dulls its edge and warps the fibers. What we thought was smooth wood is not—it has a knot!

2055 染染 to dye
In old times, dying and dye craft was a secret art. Figuratively speaking, nine chemicals derived from trees and plants were poured into water to create the finished dye.

2056 凡 凡 commonplace
BF A working definition of 'commonplace' might focus on the middle ground between extremes, extremes like 'several' and very 'few'.

2057 讯 讯 message, dispatch
BF They hid the importance of the military dispatch from the enemy by using only commonplace speech in the text.
2058 壳 壳 shell, housing, case
   学 scholar 8  薄 smooth cover 280  活 several, how many? 2051
   空

   The scholar needs some special coverings for a new piece of lab equipment. How many? With this new tool, she can make the housings herself for any of her future research needs.

2059 毅 毅 perseverance
   坚 erect, stand 1179  猪, 猪 boar 1425  古 ancient bamboo spear 2053
   毅

   BF A young man stands erect for hours practicing the art of ancient bamboo spearing. He perseveres until such time as he can bring down a boar for the tribe.

2060 肌 肌 flesh, muscle
   肉 meat 317 (altered)  活 several, how many? 2051
   肌

   BF Muscle is the kind of meaty tissue that enables us to perform the several physical tasks we do each day.

2061 虎 虎 tiger
   行 action path 1421  上 on 175  古 ancient ladle 142  活 several, how many? 2051
   虎

   The tiger was special to the ancients. Capable of limitless action, it always leapt onto its prey. Magically, it replenished its several powers nightly using a special enchanted ladle.

2062 恐 恐 anxiety
   虎 tiger 2061 (altered)  心 heart (fat) 906
   恐

   BF In the presence of a charging tiger our heart will be beating wildly. In the brief time you have left, you will be subject to severe anxiety.

2063 挖 挖 dig, excavate
   手 hand r 29  洞 cave, den, hole 1098  老 whole arm 2042
   挖

   Here you are, master archaeologist, on the verge of making the discovery of the century. You are so excited you use not only your hand in the cave but your whole arm to do the excavation.

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Breast, milk

Hands raised high
Son, child
Whole arm (altered)

Here’s the charming scene: a young mother nestles her infant son inside her whole arm which is raised high as she prepares to let him nurse at her breast.

Gain, win

Perish
Meat (altered)
Employee
Several, how many? (altered)

Here’s a kooky contest for some reality television show. Start with a pile of meat on the stage, and several employees, whose mouths have been altered with piercings, try to eat more than their opponents. They perish if they don’t win.

Air, spirit, vital energy

Man (altered)
One
Whole arm (altered)

(This character is famously difficult to translate into English!)

1. Originally, this character was drawn to mimic the curling boundaries of heavenly clouds.

2. The man, altered by the accident, lies like a corpse on the pavement. Suddenly, he moved one of his whole arms to show that spirit and vital energy remained in his body.

Steam, vapor

Water
Air, spirit, vital energy

Vapor is precisely that kind of ‘air’ originating from heated water.

Set up, found, establish

Speech
Ancient bamboo spear

The warrior with the gift of speech and with the talents and abilities to use ancient bamboo spears was able to establish and found many cities and colonies.
2069 风 风 wind ■ commonplace 2056 (altered) ■ harmonious crossing 1793 fēng
For sailors and mariners, nothing is better than a commonplace wind which blows the ship quickly from port to port in a harmonious crossing.
[4 STROKES  RANK 348]

2070 疯 疯 mad, insane ■ sick 697 ■ wind 2069 fēng
A person in the grip of insanity is a frightening sight. While sick, they appear to be buffeted backwards and forwards by the winds of their inner demons.
[9 STROKES  RANK 1549]

2071 究 究 study carefully, look into ■ cave, den, hole 1098 ■ nine 2046 jiū
BF The entrance to the cave, actually an abandoned gold mine, looked spooky and dangerous. I forced myself to go in about nine feet to look into it.
[7 STROKES  RANK 429]

2072 凤 凤 phoenix ■ wind 2069 (altered) fēng
In mythology, the phoenix bird soared like the wind, so it makes sense to alter the ‘wind’ glyph to represent it. The ‘harmonious crossing’ innards become the ‘hand, also’ component, which provides a horizontal perch for it when it needs a rest.
[4 STROKES  RANK 1504]

2073 势 势 power, force, influence ■ grasp 2050 ■ strength 1492 shì
BF Mao Zedong showed great strength in grasping the reins of power, and as a result his power during his lifetime and influence after his death were and remain noteworthy.
[8 STROKES  RANK 506]

2074 投 投 throw, fling ■ hand r 29 ■ ancient bamboo spear 2053 tóu
I use my hand to take my ancient bamboo spear and fling at my super-annoying, 97-year-old mother-in-law. (Don’t worry—she grabs it and throws it right back!)
[7 STROKES  RANK 516]
What a fight! The guy with the ancient bamboo spear has ripped away a part of the other guy’s ear!

The baby grasped the spoon that had been lying in the fire. She’ll never do that again—it’s hot.

Those several marking stones each of which looks like a big open mouth marks the edge of the water.

Lead is known as a metal with a low melting point. That’s why you get those several mouth-shaped lumps when you dropped the lead solder on the hot stove.
A large boat, one large enough to hold several mouths, is called a ship.

When somebody thinks of Chinese boats they are usually thinking of the ones made with spars and masts that look like ancient bamboo spears lashed together. These are the sort called Chinese junks.

That sort of thing just won’t do. We use our hands to remove and get rid of it.

One meaty body part that is as long as an ancient bamboo spear is the thigh.

That man should be helping the other workers, but he’s walking around under the shade of the roof. If he doesn’t watch out, they’ll make him redundant!
2084 沉  沉  submerge, lower  

When organized crime makes you redundant, they throw your body in the water where it submerges to become shark food.

2085 亢  亢  overbearing, haughty

BF The emphasis is on a long neck, surmounted by a flat chin and snooty nose—the essence of being overbearing.

2086 抗  抗  resist, fight, defy

BF That guy is so overbearing as to be obnoxious. Several people are ready to use their hands to fight him.

2087 航  航  ship, craft

BF The kind of ‘ship’ we have in mind is the kind that flies through the air, or a major sea vessel. Compared to ordinary boats, these ships seem overbearing and haughty.

2088 亮  亮  light, bright

It’s so dark by the evening campfire. Several tall campers take the hint, and shine flashlights all around, to make the occasion bright and light.

2089 巩  巩  secure, solid

BF It’s hard work building a road. First, you gather together all kinds of commonplace rocks and stones and lay them on the roadbed. This will create a secure foundation.
2090 恐 恐  afraid, be frightened

During the earthquake, some masonry fell from the building which had formerly seemed so secure. Was anyplace safe? My heart beat wildly, and I became very frightened.

[10 STROKES  RANK 891]

2091 筑 筑  build, construct

In olden times, you would build a house by taking bamboo stems and anchoring and attaching them in a particularly secure and solid manner.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1130]

2092 殿 殿  hall, palace, temple

Only the king knows where the dead bodies are buried. The rebels who were speared to death are buried together deep in the bowels of the palace.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1555]

2093 孰 孰  who? what? which? (lit)

The nine of us in our large family enjoy different things. It’s hard keeping straight which of us enjoys what.

[11 STROKES  RANK 3568]

2094 熟 熟  ripe, cooked, familiar

Who gets to sit in front of the fire? Family and friends—anyone who is familiar, that’s who.

[15 STROKES  RANK 1035]

2095 亿 亿  hundred million

The lenses in a pair of glasses are like a pair of zeroes. Since there are eight zeroes in the number ‘hundred million’ (100,000,000), we would need four pair of glasses to represent this vast number. It’s not easy to carry more than one pair in each hand, so one man will have to borrow his best friend’s whole arm to carry all of them!

[3 STROKES  RANK 1057]
2096 虚虚 empty, unoccupied
tiger 2061 (altered)  trade, industry 1117  xū

Somehow a tiger escaped from the zoo and ran into the trade office building. Needless to say, those offices quickly became unoccupied.

[11 STROKES  RANK 1071]

2097 役役 military service, labor
left step 1034  ancient bamboo spear 2053  yì

BF Soldiers march (suggested by the ‘left step’) with their ancient bamboo spears. This was the heart of required military service.

[7 STROKES  RANK 1245]

2098 凭凭 lean on, rely on
assume a post 956  several, how many? 2051  píng

You assume a new post with many responsibilities. Why? Management knows they can rely on you.

[8 STROKES  RANK 1410]

2099 凯凯 triumphant, victorious
how could it be? 854  several, how many? 2051  kǎi

BF The small-town team beat all odds and emerged victorious. How could it be that these several hicks and amateurs defeated our well-trained players?

[8 STROKES  RANK 1447]

2100 佩佩 to girdle man r 953  commonplace 2056  towel 130  pèi

It’s commonplace to see men wearing towels around their waists. They are called belts or girdles. The two outer curves of ‘commonplace’ remind us of legs narrowing to the waist, where belts and girdles are normally worn.

[8 STROKES  RANK 1507]

2101 飘飘 blow, drift about
ticket 1068  wind 2069  piāo

When the wind rises, used, ripped tickets and other light-weight fragments drift about in the air.

[15 STROKES  RANK 1527]
2102 朵 朵  m for flowers
There are no components for flowers; ‘tree’ is the closest. So, if you need to know how many flowers are in a bouquet, put these components together.
[6 STROKES RANK 1571]

2103 躲 躲  hide, dodge, avoid
Look at all these flowers—so many I can’t even count them. It’s easy to place my body behind them to try to hide from the hotel manager.
[13 STROKES RANK 1644]

2104 瓶 瓶  bottle, vase, pitcher
BF Imagine cementing a couple of tiles together in a waterproof way to act as a vase. That’s a pretty intense use of the tiles. [10 STROKES RANK 1703]
BF Epidemics are sicknesses that move rapidly through a town as if the sickness traveled on swift but ancient bamboo spears.

BF Be careful when you buy woolen carpet. Burn a bit in the presence of oxygen. If it’s real wool, the ‘vital spirit’ of sheep it gives off will stink. Otherwise, if the fiber is synthetic, you’ve been cheated.

BF What are nine cars doing, being driven together? It must be a race, and their path defines the race course.

BF This man’s whole arm is overdeveloped. This comes from years of begging.

BF Someone’s whole arm is using chopsticks to shovel food into their mouths as fast as they can. This is how they eat.
2111 乾乾  
**male principle, heaven**  
5 ten 6 morning 70 man 311 (altered) whole arm 2042 qián

*BF* Every **morning**, for the last **ten** days in a row, **the man** has gotten up early to work out, and look how big his **whole arm** is compared with the rest of him! This is the **male principle** in action.  

2112 兮兮  
**great idea!**

*CMP* You can always tell when characters in an animated cartoon have a **brilliant idea**, because a simulated light bulb flashes, showing rays emanating from the top of their head. The short strokes on top are the light rays, and the smooth cover is the top of a cartoon skull.

2113 學學  
**study**  
5 great idea! 2112 son, child 1402 xué

The **child’s head** is a like an open tap. **Great ideas** flow from him non-stop. That’s the fruit of hard **study**.

2114 觉觉  
**think**  
5 great idea! 2112 see 301 jué

The result of hard **thinking** is a **great idea**, so we can **see** our way to a clear solution.

2115 晃晃  
**to dazzle**  
5 day, sun 63 great idea! 2112 (altered) son 288 huāng

**Great idea**—‘sun’ and ‘son’ sound the same but have different meanings! What a **dazzling** observation!

2116 兆兆  
**omen**  
7 north 145 (altered) zhào

*BF* It’s possible to decompose this character in terms of curves and dabs, but it’s probably simpler to remember that this pictograph represents an unfortunate turtle whose shell has been borrowed, then baked. I interpret the upright curves as representing the pattern on the shell, and the oblique strokes are the cracks induced by the heat of baking. Ancient Chinese priests used these shells as **omens** to read the future.
2117 挑 挑  select, pick
On the basis of the omens, I reach out with my hand and pick the lottery ticket that will bring me untold riches for sure!  [9 STROKES  RANK 1309]

2118 跳 跳  jump
The evil child jumps on the turtle with his feet, smashing the shell to bits and pieces and smithereens.  [13 STROKES  RANK 999]

2119 乘 乘  multiply
When the harvest is good, the size of the crop is a multiple of last year’s—a good omen. Note that ‘omen’ has been altered until it looks like ‘north’ (§145).  [10 STROKES  RANK 1231]

2120 剩 剩  remain, be left over
When stuff multiplies, we sometimes get more than we need. Use a knife to cut off this surplus, and here’s the bit that’s left over.  [12 STROKES  RANK 1446]

2121 爱 爱  love
After years of enjoying each other’s company, a little acquaintanceship blossomed into a truly great idea. My friend and I realized we were deeply in love.  [10 STROKES  RANK 394]

2122 桃 桃  peach
Besides being used for eating, peaches—or more properly, their tree-like pits—played a role in ancient religion. Priests read the wrinkles on the pits as omens.  [10 STROKES  RANK 1839]

2123 迈 迈  move forward
CMP It’s difficult to walk forward without moving your arms. The two dabs here suggest this movement in the style of comic book-art.
2124 这 this, these  move forward 2123  language, culture 1804 zhè

‘This’ is used for a specific thing you have in mind. In your speech you move forward to this object, an important cultural artifact.  [7 STROKES  RANK 11]

2125 过 cross, go over  move forward 2123  inch 210 guò

Crossing a street or going over a bridge is moving forward by a fixed amount.  [6 STROKES  RANK 46]

2126 道 direction, way  move forward 2123  head, leader 1167 dào

If you move forward by following the proven leader, you’ll surely be following the right way.  [12 STROKES  RANK 52]

2127 还 still or yet  move forward 2123  no! 1452 hái

You try to move forward, but the powers that be do not allow it. Therefore, you have yet to reach your goal.  [7 STROKES  RANK 80]

2128 进 enter  move forward 2123  well 1672 jìn

The enemy moves forward into the cave, but we’ve laid a trap! We’ve covered the well with a grid of sticks, which they don’t notice. As they move forward in the gloom, we rejoice as they tumble down, screaming for mercy.  [7 STROKES  RANK 81]

2129 逆 go against, disobey  move forward 2123  running sheep 1662 (altered)  receptacle 155 nì

The shepherd moves forward to catch the running sheep who escaped from the pen. The sheep is guilty of disobeying orders!  [9 STROKES  RANK 1975]

2130 迅 rapid  move forward 2123  commonplace 2056 (altered) xùn

Ambitious young people try their best to rapidly move forward away from their commonplace past, toward their bold and exciting future.  [6 STROKES  RANK 1090]
Roads and trade routes came to be established as merchants moved forward along the same paths to sell their surpluses for other products.

Imagine a list of things moving forward into the future. As you step forward, you have plenty of resources each time you deal with it.

Expert seamstresses and seamsters gain their reputations because each time they make a stitch in the silk clothes it’s identical to every other.

The circus has come to town! We stayed up late to watch the procession of cars, each moving forward in sync with every other car, as if they were all linked together.

Those beautiful water lilies that grace a pond are not, as they appear, bunches of distinct plants. Rather, these grasses are all linked one to the other.
邀 邀 invite, request
move forward 2123 white 201 put, place 2007 (altered) yāo
It’s the first time I’ve been invited over to meet my girlfriend’s parents. For the occasion, I put on a white shirt, and I’m confidently moving forward towards her house. [16 STROKES RANK 1854]

通 通 lead to, go to move forward 2123 corridor, path 1745 tōng
Where do the corridors lead to? If you don’t move forward, you’ll never find out. [10 STROKES RANK 190]

返 返 return to move forward 2123 oppose, anti- 1863 fān
After the opposition was quashed, the soldiers can move forward and return home. [7 STROKES RANK 1430]

达 达 attain, reach move forward 2123 big 330 dá
It’s your big day. Years of nose to the grindstone and slow but steady movement forward through the company are finally paying off. Today you attain your goal—vice-president in charge of advertising! [6 STROKES RANK 289]

退 退 retreat, retire move forward 2123 tough, hard to chew 1810 tuǐ
The wacky soldiers found it hard to chew and move forward at the same time, so they had to retreat. [9 STROKES RANK 723]

腿 腿 leg moon, month 1719 retreat, retire 2140 tuǐ
The army retreated by light of full moon. So as to remain quiet and not alert the enemy, they used their legs exclusively, forgoing the convenience of noisy cars or horses. [13 STROKES RANK 1351]

运 运 move, transport move forward 2123 cloud 751 yùn
I hate moving! Transporting stuff is so tiring and makes it seem far. A better attitude is to turn off your mind, and move forward in the direction of the distant clouds until it all gets done. [7 STROKES RANK 345]
2143 边边 side, margin, edge  move forward 2123 strength 1492 biān
Stranded in the desert, we have no choice but to move forward. Using the last reserves of our strength, we hope to get to the edge of the sands before we give out.

2144 近近 near, close to  move forward 2123 catty 118 jìn
The rare Chinese table (Tang dynasty) is in danger of toppling and collapsing because it is unbalanced. We can move forward quickly enough to catch it because we happen to be close to it.

2145 造造 build, fabricate  move forward 2123 tell 189 zào
The clever inventor is so persuasive when he tells his backers what his plans are that he is able to move forward in the fabrication of his next invention.

2146 远远 far, distant  move forward 2123 dollar 293 yuán
The more distant are the places that you want to move forward to via train, the more money the ticket costs.

2147 选选 choose, select  move forward 2123 first 300 xuǎn
As he moves forward in life, he always seems to do better than anyone else, seems always to be first. He claims it’s because he always chooses the best alternatives.

2148 随随 follow, comply with, as soon as  hills 735 move forward 2123 have 1725 suí
The hills have come alive, as in some 50’s sci-fi flick. They are moving forward toward the town, to take over the people’s possessions. They are complying with the orders of the largest mountains (their chiefs), who have also come to life.
2149 速 速 fast, speed  move forward 2123  bundle, bunch 394  sù
BF As I moved forward, the bundle of reeds started to come apart. I've got to move fast if I want to get to the table before the reeds are all over the place.

2150 适 适 appropriate, suitable  move forward 2123  tongue 225  shì
BF Imagine Hansel and Gretel in the gingerbread house, but this time they’re blindfolded with their hands tied behind them. They move forward carefully, using their tongues to make sure their route is still suitable.

2151 述 述 state, narrate, relate  move forward 2123  art, skill 405  shù
BF The art of narrating a story is just that—an art. Your narrative has to be interesting, but keep the action moving forward, or else you lose your audience.

2152 送 送 give a present  move forward 2123  shut, close 113  sòng
BF Oh, no! I forgot to get an anniversary present for my wife. As I moved towards the store, it shut its doors at closing time. What will I do now?

2153 遍 遍 all over, everywhere
BF A giant, purple people-eater from outer space is chasing me. I'm everywhere, constantly moving forward so it doesn't catch me and crush me flat.

2154 遗 遗 lose, leave behind  move forward 2123  expensive 437  yí
BF The train ticket was too expensive for me. The rest of the class got on the train which moved forward and left me behind.
逐逐 pursue, chase

A little known fact: there are hundreds of thousands of feral *boars and pigs* running wild in this country, mostly down south. They make fine eating, but *moving forward* to *chase* and *pursue* them takes some skill.

[10 STROKES RANK 954]

迫迫 compel, force, coerce

BF I was *moving forward* in my car, when there suddenly must have been an accident, a serious one. For I woke up surrounded by people dressed in *white* *forcing* me to stay in bed, eat certain foods at certain times, and so on.

[8 STROKES RANK 1006]
It's time to leave home, and so escape the constraints of youth. It's a time of moving forward under the sure knowledge that the omens all predict good things for you.

I move forward always under the protection of the law. That way, I never feel worried, anxious, or that I have to avoid and evade bill collectors, landlords, and police officers.

Both the plaintiff and defendant met each other by chance at the local supermarket. In this social setting, they resolved their differences, and so could move forward with their lives.

Our friends move forward to us. We haven't seen them since college! We hold our heads high as we prepare to welcome them.

We can move forward after an exceptional harvest. The reason was the new irrigation method we used, which allowed the water seep through to the plants effectively and efficiently.
2162 迹迹 mark, trace, remains  
move forward 2123 also, too 1503 
jí

BF Several things happen when you *move forward* on a trip. First, you get closer to your goal. But you *also* leave *traces* of yourself—footprints, tire tracks, credit card receipts, and so on—behind.  
[9 STROKES RANK 1098]

2163 迷迷  
confused, be fascinated by  
move forward 2123 rice 1127 mí

You’re supposed to *move forward*, but the handful of *rice* you see scattered about in all directions summarizes your state of mind. You don’t know which way to turn; you’re all *confused*.  
[9 STROKES RANK 1153]

2164 违违  
disobey, violate  
move forward 2123 leather 115 wéi

BF I told my teen-age daughter she could not *go out* Saturday night. I threatened her with my *leather* belt if she *disobeyed* me.  
[7 STROKES RANK 1184]

2165 迟迟  
late, tardy  
move forward 2123 ruler 704 chí

I broke my walking stick, so I *went* to my friends’ using a *ruler* instead. It was too short, I walked slower than normal, and I got there very *late*.  
[7 STROKES RANK 1374]

2166 迪迪  
enlighten, guide  
move forward 2123 let sb do sth 48 dí

BF I will let my students *move forward* and *do what they want*, but only up to a point. They are under my *guidance*.  
[8 STROKES RANK 1440]

2167 递递  
hand over, transmit  
move forward 2123 younger brother 1450 dì

Since the estate was *handed over* to the oldest son, *younger brothers* had to learn to *move forward* with their lives and not depend on family money.  
[10 STROKES RANK 1538]
2168 巡 巡 patrol, make the rounds  
**BF** Olden times, and **patrolling** the city’s perimeter involved **moving along** the nearby **river**.

2169 逼 逼 force, press on towards  
Consider the explorers we all learned about in school. As they **moved forward** on their journey, they encountered **ranges** of all kinds—in climates, peoples, languages, food, and creature comforts. Still, they **pressed on towards** their goal.

2170 逻 逻 patrol  
**BF** The ‘**birds**’ you catch while **moving forward** on **patrol** are a lot like the winged creatures in the air, just a bigger and more dangerous.

2171 遵 遵 abide by, obey  
**BF** You **abide by** your professor’s rules when you **move forward** with **honor**.

2172 迁 迁 move*  
**BF** Moving house is **moving forward** a **large distance** from the old place.

2173 逊 逊 modest, inferior  
**BF** My grandson **moves forward** with such confidence, that we all shrink back with a sense of **inferiority**.

2174 迈 迈 step, stride  
**BF** “A journey of **ten thousand forward movements** starts with a single **step**.”
2175 淆 淆 distant, far, remote

(move forward 2123) (hands raised high 1345) (dry mountainous bits 520)
yáo

The passengers from the downed jet are stranded on the dry mountain top, frantically waving their hands in the air. We’re moving forward to rescue them, but they are far away; see how small their hands appear.

[13 STROKES RANK 1715]

2176 攵 攵 move on

CMP Don’t confuse this component with the component 「 ‘move forward’! Here, the sinuous top-to-bottom curve suggests a relaxed person out for a stroll, and he’s about to take a giant step, which is that curve extending towards the right. He’s worn out his welcome with this bunch of relatives, and he’s about to move on.

2177 延 延 prolong, postpone

(move on 2176) (action path 1421) (stop! 181)
yán

While someone is trying to move on, someone else is trying to stop him. Lot of attempted action here! That could easily postpone his departure and prolong his stay.

[6 STROKES RANK 1103]

2178 诞 诞 birth, birthday

(speech r 615) (prolong, postpone 2177)
dàn

I hate celebrating someone’s birthday. Because of all the boring speeches, I have to postpone my midday nap.

[8 STROKES RANK 1997]

2179 之 之 relationship marker

(move forward 2123 (altered)) zhī

This character participates in several constructs which show a relationship between the things surrounding it. It’s a type of grammatical marker. Readers of a certain age will agree that the central swash-like form closely resembles the mark of Zorro! The little dab on top reminds us that this is a small, particle-like word.

Also: note how the character looks like a subtly distorted version of the ‘move forward’ radical (§2123). Good relationships in life make it easy for us to move forward from one achievement to the next.

[3 STROKES RANK 44]
2180 建 建  establish, set up  
A hallmark of civilization: with the stroke of a pen, you can move on to establish new things—companies, cities, treaties, and so on.

[8 STROKES  RANK 244]

2181 健 健  healthy, strong  
A man (any person, actually) who lives in a secure and well-set-up house helps insure his continued health and strength.

[10 STROKES  RANK 979]

2182 键 键  key (lock, computer)  
You get to the gold that’s in the banking establishment by using a key to open the door.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1471]
A person *moves on* to the *infinitesimal* piece of *earth* where he must stand to address the emperor in his *court*.

You can only take *shelter* at the *imperial court* in the *front courtyard*.

The only *insect* good enough for the *imperial court* is the graceful, beautiful, eye catching *dragonfly*.

No time for slouching today! We’re visiting the *imperial court*. Use your *hand* to *straighten yourself up*.

Only *small boats* are allowed at the *imperial court*, *boats* which are smaller than those of the emperor.
2188 fá tired*, weary*

This character connects me with a seriously stunted action path. I guess I don’t feel like much action today. I am just too tired.

2189 bà dancing snake

CMP This component displays a hooded cobra snake doing its dance. Rising up on its tail, marked hood fully extended, it exerts a hypnotic effect on its viewers.

2190 bà cling to, be near

It’s impossible to take your eyes away from the dancing snake, especially if you are near it. Audience eyes cling to its movements as if there were a physical connection between it and them.

2191 bà hold or grasp

It looks like the dancing snake is going to attack. As a gesture of defense, you use your hand to grasp the snake securely, before any harm is done.

2192 sè color, look

The tourist was hypnotized by the fakir and his dancing snake. It wasn’t so much the dancing as it was the brilliant colors and patterns on the skin of the tropical reptile, so different from anything back home.

2193 jué cut off, sever, unique

BF Somehow, during the manufacturing process, the silk’s color changed abruptly from brilliant red to muddy green. Immediately, we cut off power to the machines.
Don’t just stand there—move! That’s what emerges from my mouth when I want you to move sharply away from the dancing snake I just saw under your chair. It’s impolite in Chinese just to make a command; we use 吧 to soften it.

When the child is still young enough to climb over her father and cling to him, then the father is still more of a dad than a father.

The dancing snake used to be fat, but all that dancing made his body thin.

Our Chinese scribes are emphasizing the ‘eat till you drop’ aspect of eating, the kind of eating you see at festivals, receptions, and all-you-can-eat buffets. The scepter acts like a piston or press, forcing ever more food into the guest’s mouth.

I don’t wrap up my eating sessions until I am totally full.

Following the long-standing company policy of keeping key employees content, they give us humongous amounts of food at lunch. We eat so much, that outside observers compare us to animal feeding frenzies.

I eat when I’m hungry—how about you?
2201 饭 饭 cooked rice  
Teenagers are rebels you’re stuck with. For instance, they cram nothing but junk food into themselves, and don’t eat the nutritious rice cooked for them.

2202 饮 饮 swallow liquid or insults  
Insults are all about emphasizing the miserable stuff you eat as well as the qualities you lack.

2203 饰 饰 decoration, ornament  
BF In olden times, when did people dress up and decorate themselves? To go to the market, originally a place where people gathered to buy and sell things to eat.

2204 爪 爪 clawed foot  
CMP If you’ve ever owned a cat, this sketch of a cat with extended claws about to pounce on a tender knee or bared midriff will ring true.

2205 爪 爪 claw  

2206 畏 畏 fear  
BF Fear of the unknown is particularly terrifying. Imagine a farmer out in his field, and there in front of his panic-stricken eyes are the giant claw-marks of an animal he’s never seen before.

2207 喂 喂 feed  
If you feed that wild animal, go ahead. Just toss the raw steak into its mouth, and you won’t need to fear it.
You grab the crook by seizing him with your hand, like a claw.
Unit 89

Urban Trendsetters

2209 爬 爬 crawl, creep, scramble claw 2205 clinging to, be near 2190 pá

Animals who have evolved to crawl generally have claws that make it easy to cling to a surface.

2210 内 内 animal track CMP Learn to recognize the stylized pattern of some animal’s paw print as it leaves a track. This component, also a radical, appears here drawn with four strokes; there is also a 5-stroke variant which appears at the bottoms of characters like 偶 and 遇 among others.

2211 愚 愚 stupid, foolish field 57 animal track 2210 heart (fat) 906 yú

BF Apparently some coyote was so stupid as to trap himself inside one of the farmer’s fields. Although the farmer can’t see it, the animal left plenty of tracks. Trapped animals are always dangerous, so the farmer’s heart is beating in anxiety.

2212 偶 偶 by chance man r 953 field 57 animal track 2210 óu

People and animals generally avoid each other. But sometimes, by chance, their tracks cross. This farmer encountered some wildlife in one of his fields.
2213 离 离 leave, depart

The *animal tracks* in the forest led us to the *ferocious* aardvark. We were able to get in a *covered* box which we then threw in the river. A job well done, we felt free to *leave* and go home for dinner. [10 STROKES RANK 418]

2214 璃 璃 glazed tile

*BF* Because of the economic downturn, the *jade* business has fallen to nothing. As the taste for *jade left* the buying public, they turned to decorative *glazed tile* as a cheaper alternative. [14 STROKES RANK 1894]

2215 遇 遇 meet, encounter

*BF* Moving toward his home, the farmer followed some *animal tracks* in his *fields* which led to an unexpected *meeting* with the coyote preying on his flocks. [12 STROKES RANK 899]

2216 属 属 category

Picture a naturalist trying to *categorize* a new specimen. She’s got the *body*, and various other body parts, including some *little bits* (§169), the *mouth* (§41), and *various other parts* (§2210). [12 STROKES RANK 610]

2217 Kİ child r

*CMP* The strokes of this component are stylized, but it’s easy to imagine this form as 子 ‘son’ drawn upside-down. To the original scribes, this represented the head-first position of birth, so this form represents a *child*.

2218 育 育 rear, raise, educate

*BF* If you feed a *child meat*, you nourish and *raise* her properly. [8 STROKES RANK 609]
2219 流, 流 flow, drift  water 523  child 2217  river 1495  liú
Like Moses in the bulrushes, picture a small child in a basket surrounded by flowing river water. Of course, the baby’s basket is going to go with the flow as well.

2220 疏, 疏 sparse, scattered  foot 946 (altered)  child 2217  river 1495  shū
BF As the baby in the basket was flowing in the river, I used my foot to try and stop it. But see the sharp point at the top of the altered ‘foot’ component? I was wearing pointy shoes that day, and the point struck the basket and destroyed it. The strands became scattered all over the place. Don’t even ask what happened to the baby!

2221 亥, 亥 near midnight  child 2217  man 311  hài
Children are something, especially when they’re little. Near midnight, a parent must check on them.

2222 刻, 刻 engrave, carve  near midnight 2221  knife 166  kè
A nighttime serial killer is terrorizing the city. Near midnight, this depraved person uses a knife to carve a mysterious message on the skin of his victims.

2223 该, 该 ought to, should  speech 615  near midnight 2221  gāi
It’s near midnight! Who’s speaking outside? They ought to be asleep!

2224 核, 核 nut, kernel, fruit pit  tree 375  near midnight 2221  hé
BF The crispest nuts come from the top of the tree. If I use a clock dial to represent the location on the tree, the prime harvest area is the part of the tree ‘nearest midnight’.
UNIT 89, §§2225–2230 URBAN TRENDSETTERS

2225 孩 孩 child*  
BF The *small boy* gets restive *near midnight*. But that’s life when you bring up a *child.*

2226 弃 弃 discard, abandon, give up  
BF Oh, no! The drug-addled mother on top of the *scaffolding* is about to toss her *child* off if she doesn’t get drug money. How could anyone *abandon* their children in such a depraved way?

2227 撤 撤 remove, take away, withdraw  
The ancient Confucian system of *education*: plenty of *corporal punishment*. Such a system guaranteed the *removal* of any love of learning.

2228 示 示 show r  
CMP Look closely to see how the strokes of §1064, 示, have been scrunched and slightly deformed to fit in half a character.

2229 祖 祖 ancestor  
BF The Duke of Bla-Bla’s *ancestral* records will *show* you all you want to know about his family. They (the records, not the *ancestors*) are stored in that bookshelf over there.

2230 礼 礼 ceremony, rite  
BF In ancient times, recruits to an army were ceremonially led to the edge of a deep *mineshaft* where they *ritually* threw their civilian clothes away to *show* their allegiance to king and country! This was a *ceremony*, a rite of passage, to mark the transformation from civilian to soldier.
2231 福 福  good fortune  

Good fortune means a large, happy family, all in good health. You can easily tell such a family—clean clothes in a range of sizes often hang outside to dry to show their good fortune.

2232 祝 祝  express good wishes

In this instance, we interpret the ‘show’ component as flowing lines of words issuing from a man’s mouth as he walks to and fro, carried away by the emotion of the occasion. These express good wishes for the coming holiday!

2233 祥 祥  propitious

The high priest shows the fine sheep to the congregation. It is a propitious offering to the gods.

2234 祸 祸  misfortune, disaster

The tall stranger looks just like a regular guy. But as you get to know him, he (symbolized by the mouth) shows you his inner, darker self, which has been plagued by misfortune.
Gods are created by mankind as a way to show how the world works and express eternal truths.

In a mature society of people, things are so congested in the towns that the earth barely shows between all the buildings and structures.

You look at or see something that someone shows you.

This component displays two stair steps with a hand rail on the left. Grand staircases have many more steps than this, but this is all we can fit in.

Watch this foolish and self-important government official as he swaggers down the grand staircase of the government building to his puny cubicle in the umpteenth sub-basement.
管
run, manage, have charge of

BF The government official in charge of the bamboo grove is doing a lousy job. Look how the plants tower above the building, like giant weeds.

[14 STROKES RANK 252]

追
chase, pursue

The toughest part of the chase scenes in the latest action flick are the tireless moves up and down small flights of stairs.

[9 STROKES RANK 768]

馆
guest accommodation

BF The most obnoxious types of guests used to be freeloaders. They forced citizens to provide them with guest accommodations, and they ate food greedily, because they weren’t paying.

[11 STROKES RANK 1011]

遣
send, dispatch

BF Get out of my way! I move forward up the stair steps of the central post office to send one letter before it closes.

[13 STROKES RANK 1780]

巧
breath against mirror

CMP Observe how the horizontal mirror stops and disturbs the smooth flow of the line of breath.

巧
clever, ingenious

He gets so involved in his own ingenuity that he forgets how tired he gets. He works so hard, you can see is breath fogging the mirror.

[5 STROKES RANK 1219]
number in a series  mouth  breath against mirror  
The car accident was one of a number for the young driver. We hold the mirror up to his mouth without seeing any breath at all.

concentrated, focused  breath against mirror  one  dab 
He pursed his lips so they made a small area while breathing so his breath would be concentrated into a small area on the mirror.

pass on, impart  man  concentrated, focused 
During his life, the man was so focused on the traditions of his craft, that he made sure to impart them to his children and disciples.

turn, shift, change  car  concentrated, focused 
One good way to concentrate the motion of a car is to make a sharp turn.

give or take a test  old  breath against mirror  
Omigod! The old guy sitting on the chair just slumped to the floor unconscious. Is he dead? We’ll give him the breath-against-a-mirror test to see.

loss, unfair treatment  one  breath against mirror  
I lost everything in a business gone bad. The only thing left to me was one mirror. I practiced breathing against it to keep reminding myself I wasn’t yet dead.
2252 夸 夸 boast, exaggerate

A boast is like one big breath.

2253 跨 跨 step, stride, straddle

With an exaggerated movement of your foot, you step over and straddle the fallen enemy combatant and capture him.

2254 丬 plank

CMP this is the left half of a tree (§375). You make planks from pieces of trees.

2255 壮 壮 strong, robust

Use a plank to attack a puny scholar (and so force him to exercise) to make him robust and strong.

2256 装 装 adorn, dress up

You could tell the injured man was getting better and more robust—he was taking more interest in his clothing and even dressing up.

2257 状 状 form, shape, state of things

BF An amazing dog—he stays sober no matter how much liquor his owner gives him. He still walks straight along a plank, and his state is perfect.

2258 奖 奖 award, prize, reward

Our club gives a Golden Plank Award to the member who builds the biggest project out of planks in the evening, using no artificial light.
2259 氏氏 plant root ball
The horizontals suggest the top layer of fertile soil. Through it, several roots snake down, seeking moisture and nutrition.

2260 氏氏 surname
The roots of a plant are like the family ancestors that define a family. The plant root ball bears the surname of its predecessors. [4 STROKES RANK 1500]
BF The stray roots of a mysterious, giant \textit{plant root ball} grow over the face of the \textit{sun}, reducing its light. It looks like \textit{dusk}.  

BF This man feels bound by China’s family traditions, and is not happy. The arranged \textit{marriage} with his parents’ choice of a \textit{woman} means he will never see his true love again. The world darkens—to him all is perpetual \textit{dusk}.

BF \textit{Plants root balls} are vigorous. You can cut away a huge amount of the root system, for example, and as long as you leave the \textit{small} nucleus you have the \textit{basic} material from which the plant can flourish.

BF The giant, but \textit{basic} tree stump looks like it could fall over at any time. The \textit{little} stone underneath helps balance it, but it still threatens passersby. I guess I’ll have to stand here and use my \textit{hand} to \textit{sustain} it.

BF Here the \textit{basic} part of a \textit{shelter} is the \textit{base} of the roof.
2266 低低 let droop, hang down

The basic price for the new car was so great that the man hung his head in despair.

2267 纸纸 paper

Here’s some weird paper. The pulp is made from plant root balls, and silk threads line the edge. The overall effect is one of luxurious craftsmanship.

2268 斧斧 banner, follow me!

CMP Men follow each other in the same direction under the influence of a charismatic leader (“follow me!”) or under the representation of such leadership—a banner.

2269 族族 clan, race, tribe, group

The dark side of tribal membership: under the misguided direction of the wrong kind of leader, people use their arrows against other groups.

2270 旋旋 revolve, circle, spin

BF The world revolves about the great leader. I will follow on foot wherever he flies his banner.

2271 旗旗 banner, flag, emblem

BF It’s (sounds like ‘its’) time! The campaign to regain the mother land has begun. Follow the banner on the road to glory.
2272 游 游  swim, float
水 r 523  banner, follow me! 2268  子, child 1402
游

BF Hey, you in the water! Follow me to help save the dolphin children which are in danger of becoming stranded in the shallows. Don’t try to walk through the water, it takes too long. You’ll have to swim.

[12 STROKES  RANK 695]

2273 施 施  execute, carry out
banner, follow me! 2268  也*, too* 140
施

BF I need help. Follow me, and you too can share in the glory as we assist in the execution of our leader’s master plan.

[9 STROKES  RANK 553]

2274 旅 旅  trip, travel
banner, follow me! 2268  衣 839 (altered)
旅

BF We’ll have a grand time on our trip! Follow me!—but don’t forget to pack your clothing.

[10 STROKES  RANK 950]

2275 白 白  mortar and pestle
This drawing is strictly suggestive. We’ll also associate this component with a dangerous hole or cavity.

2276 白 白  mortar
pestle 2275  jìu
白

BF It looks like the pestle will crush you to bits in the jaw-like grip of the mortar.

[6 STROKES  RANK 4066]

2277 陷 陷  fall into, get bogged down
hills 735  男 311 (altered)  块 2276
陷

The man comes down from the hills, falls into a weird hole. It has branches and rocks which impede his escape—he’s bogged down and must wait for help.

[10 STROKES  RANK 1262]
2278 毁 毁  destroy, ruin
mortar 2276  labor, work 7  ancient bamboo spear 2053 huǐ

The conquerors, well-equipped with their ancient bamboo spears, have laid waste to our lands. Bombs have created ragged holes in our fields, and all public works have been razed to the ground. The ruin and destruction is complete.

[13 STROKES  RANK 1160]

2279 插 插  insert, stick in  hand  r 29  dry 10  mortar 2276 chā

The powder has to be completely dry before you insert it by hand in the mortar for further grinding. Otherwise, you get this dreadful, muddy gunk.

[12 STROKES  RANK 1495]

2280 鼠 鼠  mouse, rat  mortar 2276  toothy jaws  long tail shǔ

BF Here’s a cute (?) little animal with toothy jaws and a long tail, but so small it could fit into the opening of a mortar. It’s a mouse!

[13 STROKES  RANK 1693]
Appendix

On-line Resources

On-line resources come in two flavors: (1) review and reinforcement; and (2) everything else. You can find all these at our Website

www.EZChinesey.com

all (unless otherwise noted) freely available. This appendix describes the material that has been prepared at the time this book was completed. But we’re always adding fresh material, so check back often to see what’s new!

All these files use the so-called PDF format, and you may download, preview, and print these files using any program (such as Adobe Acrobat™, and there are many others for all computer platforms) that can handle this type of file.

Review and reinforcement
‘Review files’ include flash cards, end-of-unit review lists, and graded reading practice. Each comes with its personal collection of pros and cons.

Flashcards
No serious study of Chinese characters is complete without some kind of flashcard system.

There is a large file at the EZChinesey Website called easyFlash.pdf you can use to print flashcards. The cards are printed according to the units in this book, so there’s usually a few blank cards at the end of each unit. Let’s first discuss the mundane physical details of flash card production, which turn out to be not so mundane at all.

First off, our flash cards break with tradition in size. Ours are relatively small—the size of business cards. Decks of these small cards are easy to carry, convenient for purse or shirt pocket, and a snap to shuffle. To print them, you’ll need to load your printer with ‘card stock’ paper in the color of your choice (ordinary paper doesn’t really have sufficient heft).

The cards themselves are printed with lines at all four edges. To print the cards, make sure you only print the odd-numbered pages in the file!! (For the teacher’s pets among you, you can print the cards in two passes. On the first pass, choose ‘odd numbered pages only’ to print the tops. Take these sheets turn them over and/or rotate them by one hundred-eighty degrees,
and print the even numbered pages to get the backs. Experiment with a few pages until you get it right. The backs of these cards contain character and pronunciation information.) The primary cards show the character, its definition, its pronunciation, panel number and page, rank, and unit number.

That’s the easy part. Now, how do you separate the cards? To be sure, if you load your printer with micro-perforated computer business card stock, each of our cards will be nicely centered on one of these cards. But there are problems. These forms often don’t take well to printing (especially in two passes); they often come apart at the seams. Moreover, they are punishingly expensive. If you use top-of-the-line card stock, you’ll be spending in excess of $220 just for these cards! Some large stationery companies provide their own brand cards, such as Quill Office Products at www.quill.com (item 7-20393Q), but these don’t fold cleanly, and leave all your cards with fuzzy edges. Moreover, they aren’t all exactly uniform in size. But the cost for this book’s-worth of cards is less than $50, a much thriftier alternative.

But whether regular stock or computer forms, you are still faced with the problem of ‘bursting’ all those cards. With micro-perforated cards, sit yourself down in front of the television, lose yourself in your favorite action flick, and start folding and tearing.

In case you’ve opted for solid card stock, what are your options? Office paper cutters are fine but time consuming. Scissors will surely raise blisters on your hands before you’re through, and the finished cards will look distressingly ragged regardless of the care you take. My solution has been to use a little-known office appliance specifically designed for the cutting of business cards. This gadget, costing less than $100, cleanly cuts a single sheet into ten cards in two passes, and it’s fun to use. Maybe you’ll find, as I have, that blank business cards are perfect for making notes to yourself, so the utility of this gadget persists long after you’ve become a Chinese character expert. Visit us at www.EZChinesey.com to order one.

You’ll also find a separate file from which you can print ‘dividers’ for the finished cards. In addition to divider-sized cards labeled ‘Unit 1’ through ‘Unit 91’ there are also dividers with the alphabet, and a page of blank tabs. These last are in case you become so enamored of these cards that you adapt existing information systems to them.

But even after your cards are cut and collated, how do you manage the piles and piles of cards that this process inevitably generates? Surprisingly, there don’t appear to be any commercial products for business cards which are comparable to index card boxes. By chance, I determined that boxes containing Pennsylvania Dutch sourdough pretzels (in the snack section of your local supermarket, in the pretzel section) will serve admirably, but watch out—these pretzels are quietly addictive! Once you’ve finished a box, cut off the bottom (or side) to use for your card trays. In my area, metropolitan New
York City, no brand is any more useful than any other (but I do have my taste favorites).

In summary: flashcards have several advantages. They are traditional, convenient, and comfortable—there’s nothing like massaging a pack of flash cards. On the other hand, they require labor to prepare them, and some care to store them properly.

End of unit reviews
Review material for the end of each unit is an attempt to provide a convenient review technique without the drawbacks of flash cards (cutting problems, storage concerns). This material appears in the file GBSureview.pdf.

Originally, this kind of material consisted of three lists—a list of pinyin (from which you could quiz yourself on characters and meanings), characters (to review pronunciation and meaning), and definitions (characters and pronunciation). This material was in columns, and you can imagine running up and down each column, reading sometimes from left to right, or from right to left for the sake of variety. However, no matter how you staggered these patterns, you couldn’t be sure that you were memorizing the order in which this material was listed rather than the actual content.

For this reason, for each unit, this tripartite grouping is now presented in each of several “shuffles.” So, for example, the columns displaying the actual characters are presented once in the order of the text, and thereafter in three random shuffles. The format remains the same, but the re-shuffling provides variety and spice. You can practice this material up and down, left to right, and vice versa on a total of four layouts (the original plus three shuffles), lessening the chance that you are inadvertently memorizing the order rather than the content.

Moreover, it’s easy to print this material, for it’s formatted for letter-size output. While these sheets may not be as convenient as flashcards, you can easily trash and re-print them as necessary.

Graded practice
‘Graded practice’ refers to material that you can practice reading or translating, meticulously arranged in such a way that each of its entries uses only material that has been presented previously.

There are several Chinese-English dictionary files whose compilers have graciously made them available. The grand-daddy of them all is the CEDICT project started by Paul Denisowski in 1997 which aimed to provide a complete downloadable Chinese-to-English dictionary, accompanied by pronunciation in pinyin. It has recently returned to life under the name CC-CEDICT, and is currently available from

Please observe the conditions of its license, which more or less allows you to use this data for both non-commercial and commercial purposes provided that you: mention where you got the data from (attribution) and that in case you improve or add to the data you will share these changes under the same license (share alike). At this time (summer, 2009), there are more than 84,000 entries in this dictionary.

Anyway, since dictionary files are text files, it has proved possible to re-order their entries in such a way that entries depend only on words and syllables that came before. The resulting files have been formatted and typeset, and are quite lengthy (over 500 pages as of summer, 2008). As the compilers of the parent dictionary files augment their files, we will update these practice reading files. The reading practice file originating from the cedict project is ezreaderup.pdf.

Other Material
Other on-line references are less compelling. They consist mainly of helpful indices to the book, some useful study aids, and a dictionary look-up shortcut; you should feel free to consult them as time and your needs permit.
Greetings—we hope you’ve journeyed with us to the end! If you got here by dint of hard work, you will have learned a total of 2280 characters and components, which is how many panels there are in this volume. Of this number, 2178 are independent, legal characters, while 102 are components, with which independent characters are constructed.

These indices present the components and definitions found in this volume, separately, in alphabetical order.

The component index lists all components in alphabetical order. Each index entry contains the panel number, the component, its name, and its page. A total of 102 distinct components appear in this book.

The definition index immediately follows. Character information is alphabetized by the brief definitions that is part of the title line of the panel. Leading asterisks are ignored in the alphabetization process. (Remember, a leading asterisk indicates a grammatical function rather than a definition. A trailing asterisk indicates a meaning that has previously appeared with a different character.) We ignore any leading ‘to’, ’the’, or other short word that is part of the definition. (For example, ’bat’ would be ambiguous—is this a noun or a verb?—but ‘to bat’ helps resolve this ambiguity.) Because these leading ’to’s are also ignored during alphabetization, ’to bat’ would appear towards the beginning of the b’s, and not under ‘to bat’.

In addition to the definition, each entry contains contains the corresponding character, pinyin, panel number, and the page number in italics.
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Here are all characters listed according to their pīnyīn pronunciation. The parenthesized number following the pīnyīn is the number of homonyms listed; we omit this information if there are no homonyms. Characters with the same pronunciation are arranged by frequency order. The numbers refer, though, to the panel in which they appear in this work, and its page number (in italics).

Let’s summarize some interesting information. First, let’s agree that a “pronunciation” refers to a single pīnyīn transcription, so that (for example) ‘bā’, ‘bǎ’, and ‘ba’ are three pronunciations. For any valid pronunciations, there will be one or more characters with that pronunciation.

In this index, there are 939 different pronunciations.
There are 426 pronunciations which map to 1 character.
There are 224 pronunciations which map to 2 characters.
There are 128 pronunciations which map to 3 characters.
There are 67 pronunciations which map to 4 characters.
There are 39 pronunciations which map to 5 characters.
There are 18 pronunciations which map to 6 characters.
There are 12 pronunciations which map to 7 characters.
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There are 3 pronunciations which map to 10 characters.
There are 2 pronunciations which map to 11 characters.
There is 1 pronunciation which maps to 12 characters.
There are 3 pronunciations which map to 14 characters.
There is 1 pronunciation which maps to 16 characters.
There are 2 pronunciations which map to 17 characters.

The biggest winners in this syllable-to-character lottery are the syllables ‘shì’ and ‘yì’ which each map to 17 distinct characters. The syllable ‘jì’ maps to 16 characters, while ‘fù’, ‘lì’, and ‘yù’ each map to fourteen. ‘Xi’ maps to twelve, and ‘jiàn’ and ‘wèi’ map to eleven characters apiece. Finally, we’ll mention that ‘jí’, ‘jiān’, and ‘jù’ each map to ten characters.

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