CHINESE BOOST

Literature and poetry Chinese vocabulary list

75 words with pinyin, 繁體 and meanings, 50 of them with an example sentence.
Every word here links to its entry on the site.

Parts 1 2 3 4

Literature and poetry Chinese vocabulary list on the web
The same words as a CSV, for Anki or a spreadsheet
A free account, which keeps 简体 or 繁體, pinyin or 注音 and the rest of how you read Chinese on every device

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Elementary (HSK 1-3)

故事
gùshi narrative / story / tale
gùshì old practice

> 我想听个故事!
> Wǒ xiǎng tīng gè gùshi!
> I want to hear a story!

Intermediate (HSK 4-6)

小说 小說
xiǎoshuō novel / fiction

> 我不看他的小说。
> Wǒ bú kàn tā de xiǎoshuō.
> I do not read his novels.

作者
zuòzhě author / writer

> 作者是巴西人。
> Zuòzhě shì Bāxī rén.
> The author is Brazilian.

作家
zuòjiā author

> 他想成为一名作家。
> Tā xiǎng chéngwéi yì míng zuòjiā.
> He wants to become a writer.

作品
zuòpǐn work (of art) / opus

> 我不很熟悉他的作品。
> Wǒ bù hěn shúxī tā de zuòpǐn.
> My acquaintance with his works is slight.

诗 詩
shī poem / poetry / verse

> 她写了好多诗。
> Tā xiěle hǎoduō shī.
> She wrote a lot of poems.

文学 文學
wénxué literature

> 文学是美丽的。
> Wénxué shì měilì de.
> Literature is beautiful.

诗人 詩人
shīrén poet / bard

> 他只是个诗人。
> Tā zhǐshì gè shīrén.
> He is nothing but a poet.

角色
juésè role / part (in a play or movie etc)

> 她演的角色很受欢迎。
> Tā yǎn de juésè hěn shòuhuānyíng.
> The character she plays is very popular.

象征 象徵
xiàngzhēng symbol / emblem / to symbolize / to signify / to represent

> 富士山是日本的象征。
> Fùshì Shān shì Rìběn de xiàngzhēng.
> Mt. Fuji is a symbol of Japan.

比喻
bǐyù to compare / to liken to / metaphor / analogy / figure of speech / figuratively

> 老师说，这个比喻很有意思。
> Lǎoshī shuō, zhège bǐyù hěn yǒuyìsi.
> The teacher said this metaphor is very interesting.

散文
sǎnwén prose (as opposed to verse) / free-form literary prose, such as essays, sketches and reflections

> 昨天我们写了我们的散文。
> Zuótiān wǒmen xiěle wǒmen de sǎnwén.
> Yesterday we wrote our essays.

诗歌 詩歌
shīgē poem

> 她从小就爱读诗歌。
> Tā cóngxiǎo jiù ài dú shīgē.
> She has loved reading poetry since she was little.

描写 描寫
miáoxiě to describe / to depict / to portray / depiction / portrayal

> 作者描写了一个小城的春天。
> Zuòzhě miáoxiěle yí gè xiǎochéng de chūntiān.
> The author depicts spring in a small town.

情节 情節
qíngjié circumstances / plot / storyline

> 这件事情像是电影情节。
> Zhè jiàn shìqing xiàng shì diànyǐng qíngjié.
> That's something like a movie scenario.

题材 題材
tícái subject matter

> 他最喜欢写历史题材的小说。
> Tā zuì xǐhuan xiě lìshǐ tícái de xiǎoshuō.
> He likes writing novels with historical subject matter best.

古诗 古詩
gǔshī old verse / Classical Chinese poem

> 这首古诗你读懂了吗?
> Zhè shǒu gǔshī nǐ dúdǒngle ma?
> Did you understand this classical poem?

诗词 詩詞
shīcí verse

> 爷爷每天早上都会背几首诗词。
> Yéye měitiān zǎoshang dōu huì bèi jǐ shǒu shīcí.
> Every morning my grandfather recites a few poems.

韵律 韻律
yùnlǜ cadence / rhythm / rhyme scheme / meter (in verse) / prosody

押韵 押韻
yāyùn to rhyme / sometimes written 壓韻|压韵

著作
zhùzuò to write / literary work / book / article / writings

> 这位老教授有很多重要的著作。
> Zhèwèi lǎo jiàoshòu yǒu hěn duō zhòngyào de zhùzuò.
> This old professor has many important works.

Advanced (HSK 7-9)

主人公
zhǔréngōng hero (of a novel or film) / main protagonist

> 主人公最后去哪儿了?
> Zhǔréngōng zuìhòu qù nǎr le?
> Where did the main character end up in the end?

意境
yìjìng artistic mood or conception / creative concept

意象
yìxiàng image / imagery

抒情
shūqíng to express emotion / lyric

> 诗人常借风景抒情。
> Shīrén cháng jiè fēngjǐng shūqíng.
> Poets often use scenery to express their emotions.

对仗 對仗
duìzhàng antithesis (two lines of poetry matching in sense and sound) / to fight / to wage war

唐诗 唐詩
tángshī Tang poetry / a Tang poem

> 外国学生也对唐诗很感兴趣。
> Wàiguó xuésheng yě duì Tángshī hěn gǎnxìngqù.
> Foreign students are also very interested in Tang poetry.

李白
lǐbái Li Bai (701-762), famous Tang Dynasty poet

> 李白写过很多关于月亮的诗。
> Lǐ Bái xiěguo hěn duō guānyú yuèliang de shī.
> Li Bai wrote many poems about the moon.

杜甫
dùfǔ Du Fu (712-770), great Tang dynasty poet

> 成都有一座纪念杜甫的草堂。
> Chéngdū yǒu yí zuò jìniàn Dù Fǔ de cǎotáng.
> In Chengdu there is a thatched cottage in memory of Du Fu.

鲁迅 魯迅
lǔxùn Lu Xun (1881-1936), one of the earliest and best-known modern Chinese writers

> 图书馆里有一整排鲁迅的书。
> Túshūguǎn lǐ yǒu yì zhěng pái Lǔ Xùn de shū.
> There is a whole row of Lu Xun's books in the library.

寓意
yùyì moral (of a story) / lesson to be learned / implication / message / import / metaphorical meaning

> 龙在中国文化里寓意吉祥。
> Lóng zài Zhōngguó wénhuà lǐ yùyì jíxiáng.
> In Chinese culture, the dragon symbolizes good fortune.

修辞 修辭
xiūcí rhetoric

> 比喻是最常见的一种修辞。
> Bǐyù shì zuì chángjiàn de yìzhǒng xiūcí.
> Metaphor is the most common kind of figure of speech.

短篇小说 短篇小說
duǎnpiānxiǎoshuō short story

> 睡觉前，她喜欢读一篇短篇小说。
> Shuìjiào qián, tā xǐhuan dú yìpiān duǎnpiānxiǎoshuō.
> Before bed, she likes to read a short story.

长篇小说 長篇小說
chángpiānxiǎoshuō novel / full-length novel

> 他正在写一部长篇小说。
> Tā zhèngzài xiě yíbù chángpiānxiǎoshuō.
> He is writing a novel.

红楼梦 紅樓夢
hónglóumèng A Dream of Red Mansions (first completed edition 1791) by Cao Xueqin 曹雪芹[Cao2 Xue3 qin2], one of the four great novels

> 我奶奶特别爱看红楼梦。
> Wǒ nǎinai tèbié ài kàn Hónglóumèng.
> My grandmother loves reading Dream of the Red Chamber.

西游记 西遊記

xīyóujì "Journey to the West", a Ming dynasty novel by Wu Cheng'en 吳承恩|吴承恩[Wu2 Cheng2 en1], one of the Four Great Classical Novels of Chinese literature, also known as "Pilgrimage to the West" or "Monkey"

> 我小时候天天看西游记。
> Wǒ xiǎoshíhou tiāntiān kàn xīyóujì.
> When I was little, I watched Journey to the West every day.

典故

diǎngù classical story or quote from the literature / the story behind sth

名著

míngzhù masterpiece

> 你读过哪些中国名著?
> Nǐ dúguo nǎxiē Zhōngguó míngzhù?
> Which Chinese literary classics have you read?

文采

wéncǎi literary talent / literary grace / rich and bright colors

> 这封信写得很有文采。
> Zhè fēng xìn xiě de hěn yǒu wéncǎi.
> This letter is written with great elegance.

鉴赏 鑑賞

jiànshǎng to appreciate (as a connoisseur)

> 他很有鉴赏古董的眼光。
> Tā hěn yǒu jiànshǎng gǔdǒng de yǎnguāng.
> He has an eye for antiques.

赋 賦

fù to bestow on / taxation / to endow with / poetic essay

传奇 傳奇

chuánqí legendary / fantasy saga / romance / short stories of the Tang and Song Dynasty

> 这位老人的经历很传奇。
> Zhèwèi lǎorén de jīnglì hěn chuánqí.
> This old man's life story is quite legendary.

文人

wénrén cultivated individual / scholar / literati

> 那位文人喜欢写字画画。
> Nà wèi wénrén xǐhuan xiězì huàhuà.
> That scholar likes calligraphy and painting.

专著 專著

zhuānzhù monograph / specialized text

> 他花了五年写这本专著。
> Tā huāle wǔ nián xiě zhè běn zhuānzhù.
> He spent five years writing this monograph.

传记 傳記

zhuànjì biography

> 你读过他的传记吗?
> Nǐ dúguo tā de zhuànjì ma?
> Have you read his biography?

体裁 體裁

tǐcái genre / style / form of writing

> 你最喜欢哪一种文学体裁?
> Nǐ zuì xǐhuan nǎ yìzhǒng wénxué tǐcái?
> Which literary genre do you like best?

含蓄

hánxù to contain / to hold / reserved / restrained / full of hidden meaning / implicit / veiled (criticism)

> 她说话很含蓄。
> Tā shuōhuà hěn hánxù.
> She is very reserved in how she speaks.

寓言

yùyán fable / allegory / parable

> 这则寓言告诉孩子要诚实。
> Zhè zé yùyán gàosu háizi yào chéngshí.
> This fable teaches children to be honest.

回忆录 回憶錄

huíyìlù memoir

> 你看过那位老演员的回忆录吗?
> Nǐ kànguo nà wèi lǎo yǎnyuán de huíyìlù ma?
> Have you read that old actor's memoir?

朗诵 朗誦

lǎngsòng to read aloud with expression / to recite / to declaim

> 他站在台上大声朗诵。
> Tā zhàn zài táishàng dàshēng lǎngsòng.
> He stood on the stage and declaimed loudly.

Outside HSK

章回小说 章回小說

zhānghuíxiǎoshuō novel in chapters, main format for long novels from the Ming onwards, with each chapter headed by a summary couplet

> 爷爷爱听人讲章回小说。
> Yéye ài tīng rén jiǎng zhānghuíxiǎoshuō.
> Grandpa loves listening to people tell chapter-style novels.

诗经 詩經

shījīng Shijing, the Book of Songs, early collection of Chinese poems and one of the Five Classics of Confucianism 五經|五经[Wu3 jing1]

> 五经里包括诗经和春秋。
> Wǔjīng lǐ bāokuò shījīng hé chūnqiū.
> The Five Classics include the Book of Songs and the Spring and Autumn Annals.

楚辞 楚辭

chǔcí Songs of Chu, an anthology of poetic songs, many from the state of Chu 楚[Chu3], collected in the Han dynasty 漢朝|汉朝[Han4 chao2]

> 你读过楚辞里的哪一篇?
> Nǐ dúguo Chǔcí lǐ de nǎ yìpiān?
> Which piece from the Songs of Chu have you read?

元曲

yuánqǔ Yuan dynasty theater, including poetry, music and comedy

> 你喜欢唐诗还是元曲?
> Nǐ xǐhuan Tángshī háishi yuánqǔ?
> Do you prefer Tang poetry or Yuan drama-songs?

律诗 律詩

lǜshī regular verse / strict poetic form with eight lines of 5, 6 or 7 syllables and even lines rhyming

绝句 絕句

juéjù quatrain (poetic form)

> 这首绝句只有四句话。
> Zhè shǒu juéjù zhǐyǒu sìjù huà.
> This quatrain has only four lines.

平仄

píngzè level and oblique tones (technical term for Classical Chinese rhythmic poetry)

格律

gélǜ forms of versification / conventions regarding set number of words and lines, choice of tonal patterns and rhyme schemes for various types of Classical Chinese poetic composition / metrical verse

豪放

háofàng bold and unconstrained / powerful and free

婉约 婉約

wǎnyuē graceful and subdued (style)

乡愁 鄉愁

xiāngchóu homesickness / nostalgia

> 读了这首诗，你有乡愁吗?
> Dúle zhè shǒu shī, nǐ yǒu xiāngchóu ma?
> After reading this poem, do you feel homesick?

思乡 思鄉

sīxiāng to be homesick

明月

míngyuè bright moon / refers to 夜明珠, a legendary pearl that can glow in the dark

杨柳 楊柳

yángliǔ willow tree / poplar and willow / name of traditional tune

吟诵 吟誦

yínsòng to read aloud / to recite rhythmically / to chant / to intone (esp. poems in rhythm)

文笔 文筆

wénbǐ writings / writing style

> 这位作家的文笔很细腻。
> Zhèwèi zuòjiā de wénbǐ hěn xìnì.
> This writer's style is very delicate and refined.

意蕴 意蘊

yìyùn inner meaning / implication / connotation

神韵 神韻

shényùn charm or grace (in poetry or art)

格调 格調

gédiào style (of art or literature) / form / one's work style / moral character

白描

báimiáo line drawing in traditional ink-and-brush style / simple and straightforward style of writing

风骨 風骨

fēnggǔ strength of character / vigorous style (of calligraphy)

隽永 雋永

juànyǒng meaningful / thought-provoking / significant

用典

yòngdiǎn to use literary quotations / to use phrases taken from the classics

辞藻 辭藻

cízǎo rhetoric

起承转合 起承轉合

qǐchéngzhuǎnhé four-part structure of a composition: introduction, elucidation, pivot (shift in perspective), synthesis / (fig.) coherent structural progression in writing, narrative, or any unfolding process