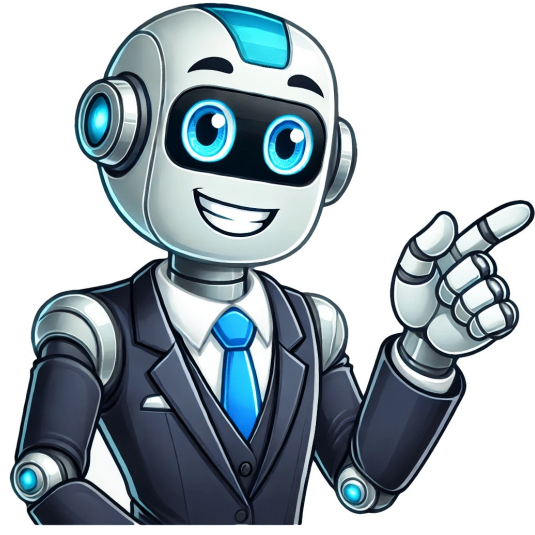


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===== The publishers need to restore access to over half a million books. Today, I'm going to discuss James Heisig and Timothy Richardson's "Remembering the Hanzi". In Japanese language learning, Heisig's original "Remembering the Kanji" is popular among those who want to remember how to write Kanji characters. The Chinese version has two formats: traditional or simplified. Currently, only book 1, with 1500 characters, is available for purchase. Since it's been out for a while, there are several reviews online that suggest you should take a look at them on Amazon. The book aims to teach how to write Chinese characters using short stories or mnemonics. So, what do I think about "Remembering the Hanzi"? It has its drawbacks. Firstly, the book lacks pinyin pronunciation for each character in the index, which surprises me. Perhaps they didn't think it through. In Chinese language learning, knowing the pronunciation of radicals can help remember similar characters. For example, 巴 bā 把 bǎ 吧 ba 罢 bà. Secondly, many stories are not good. Let's take an example: 8ming2 "bright". I find them too long-winded. Heisig should get to the point. "The moon is bright because of the sun." Done. The book starts with these giant stories for each character, but once you reach 500 characters, it's just a list. Another issue is with fonts and stroke order. In the beginning, James uses official handwritten-style font and ugly computer font. This allows readers to notice differences and errors made by computers. However, after a while, the book turns into a list of keywords plus character. Sometimes extra stroke information is provided for difficult characters, but it's not enough. On the other hand, the strength of "Remembering the Hanzi" lies in its unique idea behind the book. The authors could have done better, but the concept and stories are valuable. Learning to write Chinese characters, especially traditional ones, is a major challenge many Mandarin learners face. After studying Heisig's method, these characters become less daunting and even enjoyable to write. Overall, I think the book is worth its price. If I had to rate it, I'd give it 4/5 stars. The book is well laid out, and the author's writing style is warm and encouraging. It took me a year to finish the book after starting my Chinese studies, but most people can learn the first 1500 characters within 3-6 months if they're willing to put in hours.Remembering the Kanji is a three-volume series by James Heisig, designed to teach the 3,000 most frequent Kanji to students of the Japanese language. ===== The series is available in English, French, German, Dutch, Spanish, Polish, Portuguese, Hungarian, Italian, Swedish, and Hebrew. A supplementary book, Remembering the Kana, teaches the Japanese syllabaries (hiragana and katakana). James Heisig also wrote a book, Remembering the Hanzi, which aims to teach the 3,000 most frequent Hanzi to students of the Chinese language. ===== The method used in the series differs from traditional rote-memorization techniques. Instead, it teaches the student to utilize all the constituent parts of a kanji's written form—termed "primitives"—combined with a mnemonic device that Heisig refers to as "imaginative memory". Each kanji is assigned a unique keyword, and the student must associate this keyword with the meaning of the kanji by imagining a scene or story. ===== The series follows a specific structure. The first book presents detailed stories for 547 kanji, while the remaining kanji in Part III have component keywords but no stories. The text also analyzes kanji components, known as "primitives", which may be traditional radicals, other kanji themselves, or a collection of strokes not normally identified as independent entities. ===== The series aims to introduce kanji efficiently by building upon the primitives and kanji already learned. Volume 2 groups roughly half the kanji according to "signal primitives" that signal a certain Chinese reading. The remainder of the readings are introduced in separate chapters, designed to help students learn from everyday words and useful compounds. ===== The series has been updated several times. The first book, RTK1, was originally published in 1977. A sixth edition was released in April 2011, including corrections for errata from prior editions and additional kanji. The second book, RTK2, was released in 2012, with updates to reflect changes to the Jōyō kanji.The third book in James Heisig's series, RTK3, presents an additional 800 kanji to those learned in Volume I and II, totaling 2,200 kanji. This volume is divided into two parts, with the first part focusing on learning the writing and keywords of new kanji according to their traditional radical. The second part learns the readings of these kanji in a style similar to Volume II.The Heisig method for memorizing Chinese characters may seem straightforward: assign each character a unique English key word and break it down into components to create a mnemonic story. However, this approach has several issues. Firstly, the Heisig method neglects to teach pronunciation, which is crucial in understanding the character and its components. In reality, over 80% of Chinese characters have phonetic components that hint at their pronunciation. By skipping this step, learners may struggle to grasp the character's meaning and sound. Secondly, the emphasis on writing is misplaced. Writing is one of the least useful language skills in modern times, especially with the prevalence of digital communication. In fact, I've only needed to handwrite a handful of characters during my two-year stay in Taiwan. Moreover, learning pronunciation or the words formed by each character can aid retention and comprehension. By recognizing these flaws, learners can avoid making the same mistakes as I did and opt for a more effective approach that incorporates pronunciation and practical language skills. ===== I find that recalling the HanziHero method helps me better understand how it utilizes character usage within the language.My strangest claim is that writing should be learned last because it is too difficult. Yes, you read that right - I think writing Chinese characters should come after learning the actual language.His claim may seem strange, but I believe it's precisely the reason to delay it. Learning Chinese already poses significant challenges; the key lies in making the process enjoyable.All of that being said, if you're a firm believer in the importance of character writing, go for it! Just don't fall into the trap of prioritizing character writing over its other aspects - it's not the only aspect.Issue #3: inaccurate English keywordsHeisig's method requires each character to have a unique English keyword. However, this approach leads to issues since many Chinese characters share similar meanings.For example, characters 房 fáng 家 jiā 毛 zhǎi 厦 wù all roughly correspond to the meaning "house". Heisig assigns arbitrary synonyms like "domicile", "dwelling", or "habitation" as keywords, which don't appear in any standard dictionary entry. This means learners must learn these later.Issue #4: characters taught in poor orderHeisig's method arranges characters according to their components, with secondary consideration for usefulness or frequency. In contrast, HanziiHero teaches characters in a logical and useful order.Instead of covering nearly every character before engaging with actual language use, HanziiHero offers a more balanced approach, allowing learners to grasp the basics before delving into complex aspects.My issues with Heisig's method aside, here's an alternative: HanziiHeroNow let me cover a far better method for learning Chinese characters.It's actually the same website you're on - HanziiHero. Built by my brother and I, it aims to address Heisig's shortcomings.HanziiHero fixes all four main issues with Heisig's method.Improvement #1: accurate pronunciationHanziiHero includes hand-crafted mnemonics that teach both pronunciation and meaning of each character. The built-in review system tests learners on pronunciation, ensuring they remember it correctly.Issue #2: no character writing knowledge requiredHanziiHero doesn't require learners to possess character writing skills; instead, its review system shows characters on screen and asks for pronunciation or meaning. This way, learners can improve both their character memory and Chinese knowledge.Improvement #3: accurate definitionsHanziiHero sources its definitions from top-notch Chinese-English dictionaries, ensuring accurate meanings are learned.Improvement #4: optimal orderHanziiHero uses a custom algorithm to teach characters in an orderly fashion, making it more logical and efficient. The Chinese government has released new standards for learning characters, allowing students to pick up essential knowledge in a shorter amount of time compared to traditional methods like Heisig's. This innovative approach offers four main improvements over its predecessor and comes with even more features to enhance the learning experience. Try it out for free whenever you want and see how it can benefit your studies. The core concept of remembering Chinese characters by breaking them down into components and using mnemonics is still a great idea, but Heisig's method has some significant flaws: it neglects pronunciation, focuses too heavily on writing, uses inaccurate keywords, and presents characters in an awkward order. If you're currently using the Heisig method or something similar, consider modifying it to address these issues. Alternatively, our web app offers a more comprehensive solution that addresses all of Heisig's shortcomings. Building on the success of the approach used for learning Japanese kanji, the Remembering Simplified Hanzi and Traditional Hanzi books provide a systematic way to learn Chinese characters. By arranging characters in an order that facilitates memorization, students can associate new characters with previously learned knowledge, making the process much faster and more effective. Guidance is provided throughout the learning process, teaching students to use "imaginative memory" to connect each character's component parts with a key word that represents its meaning. This engaging approach creates memorable associations between the different elements of a character, significantly reducing the time needed for learning and preventing characters from being forgotten.Remembered text here ===== We looked over our platform. For more information, please see our Cookie Notice and our Privacy Policy. This post is a review of the method invented by James Heisig, the master of Kanji (the alphabet that Japanese people borrowed from China) and Hanzi, that is the Chinese characters.The introduction of Remember Simplified Hanzi by J. Heisig and T. Richardson starts with the following sentence:The aim of this course is to help you teach yourself, as quickly and efficiently as possible, the meaning and writing of the 3,000 most commonly used Chinese characters.I only went through the first one hundred pages (you will discover later why I didn't finish it).And I believe the book delivers what it promises.The problem is to understand what you really want.You want be the master of Chinese characters? Cool! Go for this book right now.Or you want to learn how to speak Mandarin as quickly and painlessly as possible?Because if your answer to the last question is "yes," I'm afraid Remember the Hanzi is going to disappoint you. I think this is the reason why this book is so controversial: many people buy Remember the Hanzi for the wrong reasons, that is they believe Heisig's system is a shortcut to learn Mandarin.They follow the book's instructions for a while but, after they arrive to page eighty nine and are still unable to order a coffee without sugar at the bar, they start to blame Heisig. "Remember the Hanzi is useless!" they scream with absolute certainty.Well, it is not. But is not magic neither!Remember the Hanzi: what is it?First at all, there are two versions of the book. Remember Simplified Hanzi deals with the Chinese characters used in Mainland China while Remember Traditional Hanzi is concerned with the ancient characters still used in Taiwan, Hong Kong, Macau and Singapore.Even if they are quite similar, in the sequel I will refer to Remember Simplified Hanzi, the one I read.The book is divided into two volumes, each one containing 1,500 Chinese characters for a total of 3,000 characters that cover about the 99.2% of the characters you can find in a Chinese newspaper.Remember the Hanzi will teach you a systematic method to deconstruct each character into its basic elements (for instance the character "meaning" can be seen as "stand+day+heart"), assign a meaning to each of these elements and invent a story to re-assemble the character so that you will remember it forever.Basically we are talking about mnemonics and reverse engineering.Ancient Greeks and Romans were already aware of the power of mnemonics. For instance, Cicero used to resort to mnemonics for remembering his long harangues.Using stories to remember any sort of things works. Period.But instead of trying to describe Heisig's method with words, I prefer to show you a page of Remember the Hanzi so that you can figure it out by yourself.If you want to know more about mnemonics, I recommend Quantum Memory Power, the work of the eight time memory world champion Dominic O'Brien.Coming back to Remember the Hanzi. In the first part of the book Heisig makes up the story for you. Then you are forced to invent your own stories.This is positive as mnemonics work better when you mix elements of your personal experience in your stories (people you know, places you have been and so on).Remember the Hanzi: what is not.I quote again from the introduction of the book:What you will not learn here is how to pronounce any of these characters or how to combine them to form new words.And then it goes on to explain why in Heisig's opinion it is better to firstly learn the basic components of Chinese language, that is the 3,000 most common characters, and ONLY after to learn how to pronounce them, put them together to make up words and, finally, speak.Even if he admits Chinese people learn the opposite way (that is a natural top-down approach to the language), Heisig argues this is not good for you.Now I'm not a linguist and I don't wanna dig too much into it as I feel that the diatribe "you should learn Mandarin using a top-down approach or not?" is a bit like asking:What was first? The chicken or the egg?I believe that the "best" method to learn a language doesn't exist and that different things work for different people.However if you live in China and you need to communicate with the butcher or the doctor, I want to wish you good luck if you are going to attempt to learn 3,000 characters before trying to speak ;)Why Remember the Hanzi is so popular? The myth of the 3000 charactersWhen you start to study Mandarin there will always be someLearning Mandarin is not about memorizing the 3,000 most common characters. Many people believe that knowing these characters is sufficient to become proficient in Mandarin. However, this approach can be misleading and does not take into account the complexities of the language, such as tones, stroke orders, and pronunciation. This is especially true for those with an analytical mind, who may be prone to falling into this trap. Some people may create elaborate plans to learn characters, aiming to master a certain number of new characters per day. For example, they might plan to learn ten new characters per day, six days a week, in the hopes of mastering Mandarin in just one year. However, these plans often fail when reality sets in. While learning mnemonics and character associations can be helpful for remembering meanings, it is not enough on its own to achieve fluency in the language. Ultimately, Learning Chinese requires persistence and dedication. It involves more than just memorizing characters; it also demands an understanding of the language's nuances and an ability to communicate effectively. By focusing on listening, speaking, and using language learning resources such as podcasts and movies, one can make steady progress towards becoming proficient in Mandarin.

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