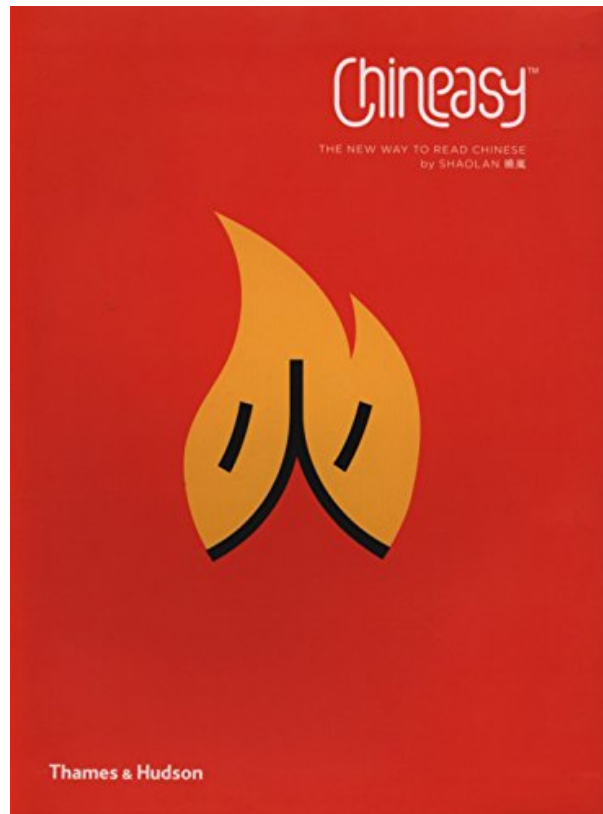
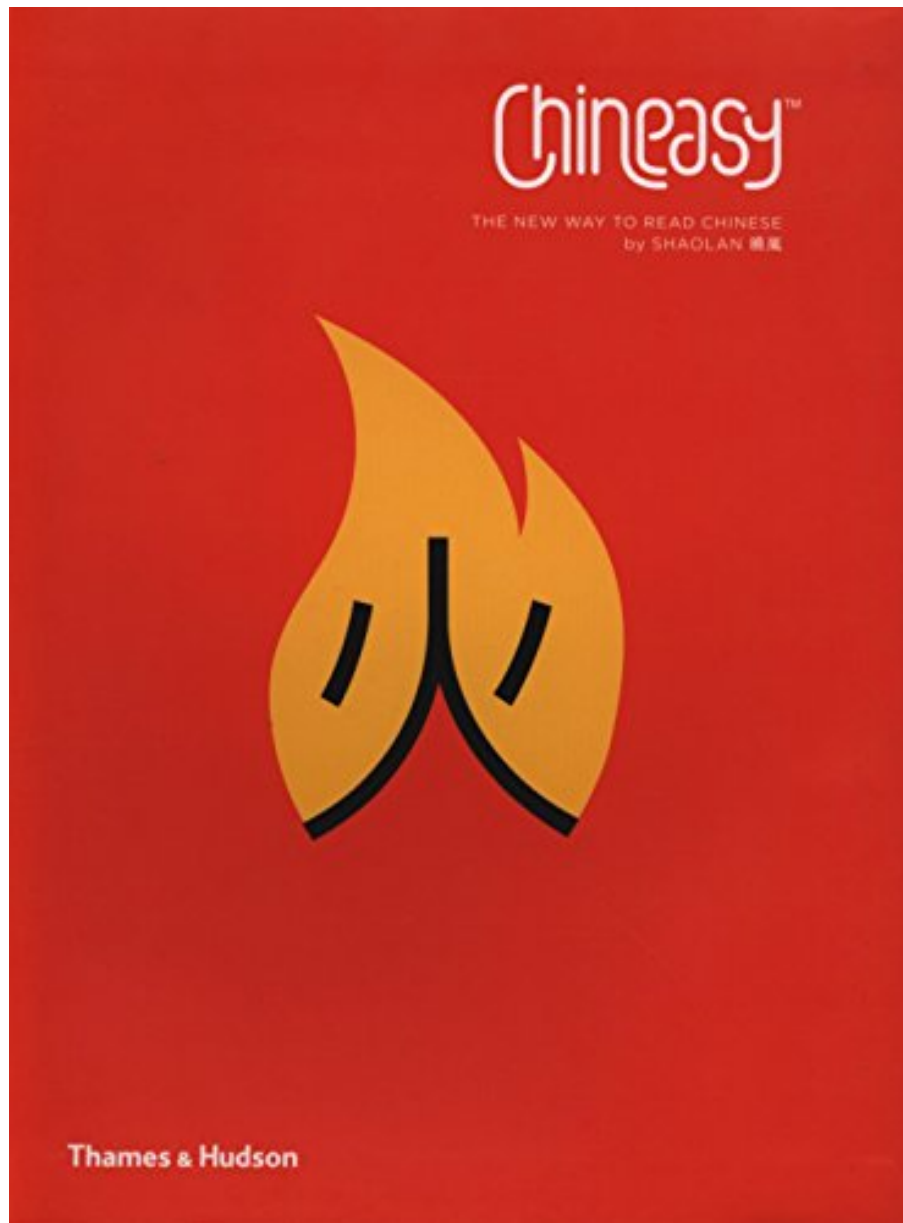


CHINEASY: THE NEW WAY TO READ CHINESE BY SHAOLAN



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Review

“These cute images make reading Chinese characters ‘Chineasy.’” (NPR's "Code Switch" Blog)

“In her delightful book...Hsueh offers an inspired approach to learning more than 400 Chinese characters.” (San Francisco Chronicle Blog)

From the Back Cover

Chinese is considered one of the most difficult languages to master. However, using the Chineasy system, anyone can begin to understand and read Chinese. It works by transforming Chinese characters into illustrations to make them easy to remember. This book teaches the key characters on which the language is built and how these characters can be combined to form more complex words and phrases. Learning Chinese has never been this simple or more fun!

About the Author

Born in Taipei, SHAOLAN is an entrepreneur, world traveler, and writer. She has written best-selling books on software, and her first internet venture became a major player in the Greater China area in the late 1990s. After moving to London to pursue studies at the University of Cambridge, in 2005 she founded Caravel Capital, which invests in young technology companies. ShaoLan is a member of the boards of the Saïd Business School of Oxford University, the Victoria and Albert Museum, Asia House and the New School Network (an organization backed by the British Government promoting educational reform).

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Learning Chinese is notoriously difficult and has long put off the most linguistically savvy Westerners ...until now. Breaking down the Great Wall of language, ShaoLan Hsueh has unpicked Chinese characters and created a simple system for quickly understanding the basic building blocks of the written language. Working with renowned illustrator Noma Bar, she has developed a unique set of illustrations that are engaging and delightful, and offer a glimpse into the wonder of the Chinese language and culture. The book's main section introduces the radicals the key characters on which the language is built and reveals how they can be combined to form a wealth of more complex words and phrases. In fewer than 200 pages, readers of all ages will have made the first steps towards a genuine appreciation of Chinese, loving every new character they learn.

- Sales Rank: #1500225 in Books
- Brand: imusti
- Published on: 2014-03-01
- Original language: English
- Number of items: 1
- Dimensions: 9.65" h x .83" w x 7.20" l, .84 pounds
- Binding: Paperback
- 192 pages

Features

- THAMES & HUDSON

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Illustrator: Israeli-born NOMA BAR is a celebrated illustrator based in London.

Most helpful customer reviews

159 of 164 people found the following review helpful.

Great coffee table book, not so great for learning Chinese characters

By Quantum Mechanic

I'm sad I missed the Kickstarter on this since I would have backed it because I love anything about learning Chinese language and it's a pretty nice idea. The book is colorful, bright and the Kickstarter backers should be proud that they helped something this pretty come to fruition. With its strong graphic design sensibilities and colorful content, it's a great book for anyone's coffee table.

Unfortunately for the learning side of things, it's not very good. I'm writing this review only because I think folks should know what exactly they're buying. While the pictures are clever, many times, the associations are a stretch and they just don't seem effective as memory devices. Also, the book switches between traditional and simplified characters seemingly to facilitate the illustrations, which can be confusing for students who would actually like to read one or the other. On top of that, some of the words that are illustrated are just not used any more (nuan2 - argue or xuan1 - shout, for example). Definitely helpful though if you're reading ancient Chinese poetry, which I'm sure, most folks are not. Of course, for that, it's not enough content.

I don't think this is a good resource for learning Chinese characters. Honestly, if the pictures thing works for you, I'd highly recommend Tuttle Learning Chinese Characters: A Revolutionary New Way to Learn and Remember the 800 Most Basic Chinese Characters since they actually put together more of a system with their images and a LOT of great explanations of how everything works. I do, however, think that Chinese is a unique coffee table book. Unfortunately, I don't have a coffee table.

146 of 154 people found the following review helpful.

DO NOT GET THE KINDLE VERSION

By Mike Young

I've seen the author's Ted Talk and followed the crowd funding for this book. I really wanted to like it. However, the Kindle version of the book is designed for art, not for functionality (reading).

It is virtually impossible to read on a tablet because of the small print (and inability to increase the size), the colors used (example, dark orchid background for small black font), and the navigation. Tried to read it in the alternative on my computer. No dice.

I've purchased several hundred Kindle books in the past couple of years. This is the first one for which I've requested a refund.

If they fix the electronic version, I'll also remove this Kindle review upon request.

In short, avoid the Kindle version like the plague. The print edition should be fine (knock on wood). If I get the print edition, I'll update this review to address the content.

March 20, 2014 Update.

I purchased the print edition and have taken the time to go through it before writing this update.

The substance of the book is good. However, the design gets in the way of using it for its intended purpose - learning Chinese characters.

It's clear after seeing both the Kindle and print editions that the Kindle edition consists of imaged pages from the print edition rather than doing formatting for the Kindle. For that, the person in charge of layout for the Kindle should be sent to the woodshed with a dunce cap.

Unfortunately, the printed pages suffer from some of the same issues that afflict the Kindle. Specifically, the many pages with dark-colored backgrounds with small black font are difficult to read. In some cases, it requires taking the book to different lighting or using a magnifying glass to figure out what's written.

In other words, the purpose of learning Chinese characters is actually frustrated by the author's efforts as an artist.

In short, here's my rating unless and until the book is fixed.

0 Stars for the Kindle edition. It's horrible.

3 Stars for the Print edition if you want to actually learn the characters.

5 Stars for the Print edition if you want a colorful book to put on the coffee table to impress friends but have no intention of actually learning Chinese characters.

51 of 56 people found the following review helpful.

Not what I hoped for when I read the description

By Sam R.

I thought this book would be different from the various other books that I have purchased over the years. I thought this book would introduce the reader to a few characters and then provide a short story using those characters as a way of helping the reader remember them. Not so. While the images are cute, the author just throws character after character at the reader with no opportunity to use them together and no opportunity to review them.

I am looking for a book or series of books that do a "Look Dick, see Spot run" approach. I would like to see a book that introduces ten or twenty characters and phrases, and then uses those characters to tell a simple story. Then I could read that story over and over again to help learn those characters. Then, of course, the book(s) would build on that by introducing more characters and more simple little stories.

This book sounded like it would do that, but it doesn't. By page 44, about 90 characters and short phrases have been introduced but no stories connecting them and no way to review them. At the end of the book, the story of Peter and the Wolf is told in English, not in Chinese. There are characters for the main players in the story, but no story. No way to put those characters together as a story. Thus, no real opportunity to learn how to read Chinese.

See all 173 customer reviews...

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