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The **Epitome** */iˈpitəmi/*

Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Kedah Branch

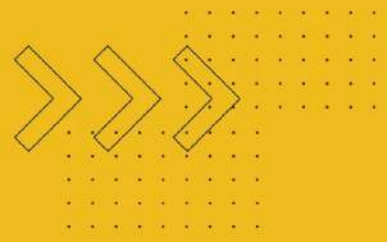
Unleash the epitome
of creative writers

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The
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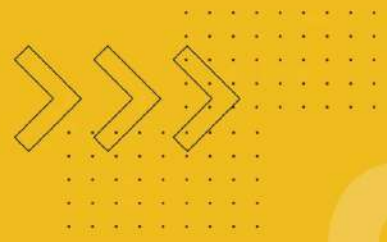
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Synopsis

The Academy of Language Studies at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) is thrilled to unveil the vibrant sixth edition of its e-magazine, The Epitome. This publication celebrates our passionate commitment and unwavering dedication to the art and craft of language and literature.

THE EPITOME emerges as a dynamic platform for a community of writers, educators, scholars, poets, and researchers, all eager to share their unique perspectives, breakthroughs, wisdom, and tales. This edition showcases a mix of creative writing genres, from the dramatic twists of Playwriting to the introspective depths of Personal Essays, including Short Stories, Songs, Speeches, Memoirs, Literary Journalism, Humorous Writing, Lyric Essays, and Innovative Essays. With a rich tapestry of voices, presenting and embracing works in English, Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Arabic, each adding its own uniqueness to the realm of language and literature.

Synopsis



The
Epitome
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Preface

Puan Robekhah Harun
Acting Head of Faculty
Academy of Language Studies
UiTM Kedah Branch

Welcome to Epitome, the 6th Issue. Epitome is the platform where writers transformed moments into meaning and emotions into language, offering readers a mirror in which they may recognize parts of themselves. The theme for this publication is Stories That Stay - A timeless collection of powerful narratives – memories, questions, friendships, losses, and life-altering choices.

Stories That Stay is a quiet yet powerful reminder that the most enduring narratives are often born from moments of reflection rather than spectacle. The stories collected within this bulletin encourages readers to pause, to listen, and to engage with experiences that linger long after the final page is turned.

The writers have approached their work with sincerity and depth, transforming personal moments into shared understanding. In doing so, they remind us that stories do not end on the page; they continue within the reader, shaping thought, emotion, and perspective.

I extend our heartfelt congratulations to the editorial team and all the contributors for bringing Stories That Stay to life. Your dedication, creativity, and thoughtful curation have resulted in a body of work that resonates with sincerity and depth. May this publication serve not as an endpoint, but as a beginning. Continue to write, to publish, and to trust in the power of your voices. The world needs stories like these – stories that stay.

May Epitome serve as both recognition and encouragement for writers to continue to write with honesty, to publish with purpose, and to trust that your words matter. In a world that often moves too quickly, your willingness to slow down and tell stories that endure is invaluable.





Editor's note

Assalamualaikum and warmest greetings,

Dear gentle readers,

Alhamdulillah, by the grace of Allah SWT, we are delighted to present the 6th issue of our e-magazine, centered on the theme "Stories That Stay." These are not just stories – they are living reminiscences, deepest questions, treasured friendships, deep losses, and life-changing choices that remain with us long after the moment has passed.

Every narrative in this issue carries a spark – a reminder that our journeys are written with wisdom, by the One who knows us best. Some stories teach, some heal, and others strengthen us when we feel we cannot go on. May these pages offer you reflection, comfort, and renewed strength, Insha-Allah.

As the Chief Editor, I extend my heartfelt gratitude to all the contributors who poured their hearts into their writing, and to you – our beloved readers – for your continuous support. May Allah bless your path as you read, reflect, and grow through these timeless stories.

Happy reading, and may your heart find what it needs.

With love and gratitude,
Hajah Razanawati Nordin
Chief Editor





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unspoken **REMINDERS**

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The night was thick, laden with a kind of silence that felt like it had settled into the very bones of the place. The bar was dim, shadows draped across the walls like old memories no one cared to acknowledge. The air tasted faintly of smoke, spilt drinks, and long-forgotten laughter that hadn't reached these worn stools in years. I sat at the counter, alone—always alone—my fingers wrapped around the dying ember of a cigar, its smoke curling like a ghost around my face. Beside me, a glass of Macallan sat untouched, the amber liquids waying ever so slightly with the faintest tremor of my hand.

The night was typical. Bleak.

It was the kind of night that made you wonder if the hours had been invented simply to stretch out the waiting, to remind you of the quiet ache of being unnoticed. The kind of night that felt like it was drawing the world in, one deep breath at a time, until everything started to feel impossibly small.

Then, like a whisper in the dark, he appeared.

A boy. Barely a man. His maroon “teluk belanga” clung awkwardly to his frame as if he were still growing into it, as if the fabric couldn't quite hold him. He walked toward me, hesitated, and then, in a voice that was too bright for the room's oppressive stillness, asked,

“Hi, there? Is this seat taken? May I?”

I blinked, not quite sure how to answer. Maybe he wasn't used to the weight of silence draping across every inch of this place. Perhaps he wasn't used to people sitting alone, sinking into the hollow space that empties out when you've been waiting too long for something to come and change you, and nothing ever does.

“Yeah, sure,” I muttered, my voice more a sound than an invitation.

He sat beside me, his weight shifting the air just a little, though it didn't matter much. I didn't know him. But there was something about him—a glance that lingered too long, an expression that didn't quite fit his youthful face. He was a stranger, and yet... he wasn't.

We exchanged words, small things at first. A bit about school, a bit about nothing. But there was heaviness to him that hung beneath the surface, a kind of quiet sadness that seemed too large for his body, too immense for his years. He looked like he was maybe sixteen or seventeen, but a weariness in his eyes suggested the passage of time had been a stranger to him, one he had known too well, too soon.

I noticed the student ID that slipped from his wallet, the green border catching the light in a way that was almost painfully bright. It wasn't the name that caught my attention, though. It was the way the card seemed to weigh more than the boy who held it.

"Are you a diploma student?" I asked, though I wasn't sure why. I had to fill the silence somehow. "I'm doing my degree there."

He nodded almost absently. "Yeah. Diploma in Linguistics. You're doing a degree, right?"

The words settled between us like dust in the dim light. I nodded again, though something in my chest tightened at the recognition. "Linguistics. It was always the same, wasn't it? Always the same words, labels, and hollow spaces where meaning should've been."

"You look younger than I expected," I said, the words tumbling out before I could stop them. "I mean, you look... how old are you?"

He smiled, a faint curve of his lips that didn't quite reach his eyes. "I'm a student from the gifted centre. They sent me here to further my studies." He paused, and for a moment, I thought I saw something flicker in him like a shadow passing through his gaze. "I'm good at linguistics, but I'm brilliant in math. It wasn't what I wanted, but I guess that's what the institute thought was best."

There was something about the way he said it, something that made my throat tighten. A boy with so much potential, forced into a shape that wasn't his own. And I could see it—how the brilliance had been bent and made to fit into someone else's idea of what it should be. It was sad in a way that cut deeper than words could reach.

He glanced at his watch, and just like that, the moment began to slip away.

"I have to go now," he said, the weight in his voice making me wonder why I hadn't noticed the heaviness until it was too late. "I'll see you around."

"Wait," I asked, "Have we met before? You... you seem familiar."

It took him a while to answer at first. His eyes seemed to search mine as though he was trying to read something that was buried too deep to find. Then, with a shrug that was too careless and knowing, he said, "Maybe," and turned away.

He walked towards the door, and for a moment, I thought he was walking straight out of my memory, leaving no trace behind. But it wasn't that simple. No, he wasn't leaving. He was fading slowly like a flicker of light being swallowed by darkness.

The glass slipped from my hand, and it shattered on the floor. The sound was too sharp, too final for the moment. And in that quiet aftermath, something deeply stirred within me. Something hollow and aching that I couldn't place.

I had seen that glance before. The knowing in his eyes—how he seemed to understand something about me that I hadn't even realised. It was as if he had looked right through me, like he could see the parts of me that I'd buried deeply.

He wasn't just a boy. He wasn't just some kid who had walked into the bar. Perhaps he was a reminder. A reminder of everything I had lost, forgotten, and left behind. The quiet despair of knowing that no matter how far I tried to run or drink the ache away, I was still stuck in a life I didn't choose. A life that once held promise but has begun to wither in the quiet decay of time. A life I didn't even recognise anymore.

But how did he know? How did he see that I was already lost? That I had been lost for so long and forgotten how to be found? How he saw the weariness in my eyes, the emptiness that clung to me like smoke. How could he tell I had been waiting for something or anything that would make the ache go away?

But as he disappeared into the night, I realised. He wasn't 'lost' at all. I was.

And somehow, in the silence long after he had gone, I knew there was no going back. There was no more chance to change things or even a glimpse of hope for finding anything to fill the hollow space he had left behind.

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Abdul Azim Mahda has been an English language lecturer at Universiti Teknologi MARA since 2022. He holds a master's degree in English Language Studies from Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia and has a deep interest in linguistics, specialising in the usage of language on social media.



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