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# *The* **Epitome** */I'pitəmi/*

Academy of Language Studies, UiTM Kedah Branch

*Unleash the epitome of creative writers*

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## SYNOPSIS

The Academy of Language Studies, Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah branch is proud to present the first issue of its e-magazine, The Epitome, as our focus to highlight our commitment to contribute to the areas of creative writing.

THE EPITOME aims to provide a platform for writers, educators, academicians, poet, and researchers to share their ideas, findings, knowledge, and experience, particularly on various creative writing genres - personal essays, poetry, short stories, songs, movie scripts, plays, and innovative projects in four different languages ( English, Bahasa Melayu, Mandarin, and Arabic).

## EDITOR'S NOTE

Dear readers,

It is with great pleasure and immense pride that we, the Academy of Language Studies at Universiti Teknologi MARA (UiTM) Kedah branch, extend our warmest welcome to all writers and readers to honor all 127 artistic masterpieces. This is indeed a tremendous achievement to commemorate our debut.

We are privileged to offer the platform for the writers to show their talents in creative writing in this magazine, which serves as a testament to our commitment to the area of personal essays, poetry, short stories, songs, movie scripts, plays, and innovative projects. Their invaluable contributions and unwavering commitment to academic excellence have played a vital role in shaping this magazine.

Thank you.

Best regards,

Editorial Board



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## EVERYONE NEEDS A SUPERHERO

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### Innovative & Creative Project: The Superhero Box

The year was 2021 when COVID-19 shoved us ruthlessly behind our cold walls. The whole world shut down, and we were not allowed to roam and conquer the world. Millions had died and were inflicted with the lethal virus. It struck us hard not only in our health and economy system but also in our education system. All schools were forced to shut down physically for months, and the teaching and learning progress was immediately withdrawn. When the Ministry of Education announced that teaching and learning must resume, virtual classes are introduced. It was an enormous transformation when we switched the teaching mode from face-to-face to online. Teachers, parents, and students had to wrestle wearily with online platforms, gadgets, connectivity, communication, and knowledge. Not only that, but all of us also had to face the battle of managing our mental health during the pandemic. If normal school children were struggling with online classes, just imagine the special needs students must experience.

Being a mother of an autism spectrum disorder (ASD) boy, I observed all my son's online classes and activities. Teachers were talking alone to the screens and my son was hardly communicating with anyone. It was sad to see that class engagement and participation were not optimal. Most communications were distorted, and some instructions were unclear. One question lingered in my mind – how could I boost my son's learning experience? We could do more than this! Let's find a way to boost their motivation and sensory motors while learning online. So, I proposed an innovative idea to my son's teacher and my team members, and we decided to introduce the Superhero Box.

Superhero Box is a toolbox containing selected items to help special needs students study at

home during the pandemic. This teaching kit was created through a unique collaboration of instructors, parents, and researchers. Not only that, but these items are carefully consulted, selected, and approved by a Ministry of Education expert Occupational Therapist. The kit's goals are to improve learning experiences through sensory stimulation, to participate in fun and active learning, and to support their emotional well-being. My son and I assembled the first seven boxes for more than two weeks. Our team brainstormed ideas and we selected items in the box so that we can distribute the box to his friends.

Based on our observation, students and parents use the items in the box during online classes. All the kits are selected and guided using the instruction manual during learning activities. Parents and students can follow the instructions, grasp the material, and carry out meaningful home-based activities because the teachers upload the videos to YouTube. The instruction manual is one of the most useful and important parts of The Superhero Box to ensure the proper usage of the kits given according to learning activities uploaded on YouTube. It will give a better experience to parents and students to ease the process of teaching and learning. It can be overwhelming for parents to cope with teaching without proper instructions. As for the Superhero box, a wide range of colours and Superhero themes were chosen to attract the main customer - the students. It is important to engage with the learning process and to sustain the focus on learning longer than usual. As the students are easily distracted and lose focus, this is one of the efforts to encourage learning engagement. A variety of selected colours may stimulate students' senses and increases energy in students as well as encourage creativity.

The teacher and students have used this Superhero Box extensively in their teaching and learning tasks for months since its introduction. For example, in a Mathematics class, the instructor used two items from the Superhero Box: dice and fake money. These two items were combined to make an entertaining and engaging activity. In another situation, during an English or Bahasa Melayu classes, the teachers used the same flashcards, ice-cream sticks, colorful beads, furry wires, clothes pegs, and play dough from the box to demonstrate during the online class activities.

Furthermore, the application of this Superhero Box for special needs students was shared with other stakeholders and got overwhelmingly positive feedback. In 2022, for example, officials from the District Education visited this school and class. The teachers gave a live demonstration of how to use this Superhero Box in class. The officers were astounded by the initiative taken by teachers, parents, and students to create novel tools to aid in the delivery of teaching and learning, particularly for those with special needs during the pandemic COVID-19.

It was remarkable to see the effort we put into it. We worked hard happily and pushed ourselves further from writing and presenting a paper, applying copyright for intellectual property (Perbadanan Harta Intelek Malaysia - MyIPO), and submitting for the international invention innovation competition – INDES 2021.

By the end of the year, to our surprise we won not one but multiple awards:

- The best paper Award at the international conference, i-InTeLEC 2021,
- The best design for Education & Special Needs Category at INDES 2021,
- Gold medal award at INDES 2021 and
- People's Choice Award at INDES 2021.

To sum up, this project taught us that hard work pays off, and all challenges are opportunities for us to learn. All you need is a great team and a creative solution. To my son and group members, you are my true superhero.



Our humble brand and poster were created by Izza Syahida.





Our award-winning certificates



Our Copyright application to Perbadanan Harta Intelek Malaysia (MyIPO)





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