

Malaysian teacher's debut novel 'Hades' on Dublin Literary Award 2024 longlist

Tuesday 23 January 2024, by [MAKETAB Hanis](#) (Date first published: 18 January 2024).

Young Malaysian author Aishah Zainal can't believe her debut novel *Hades* has made it into the longlist for the Dublin Literary Award 2024.

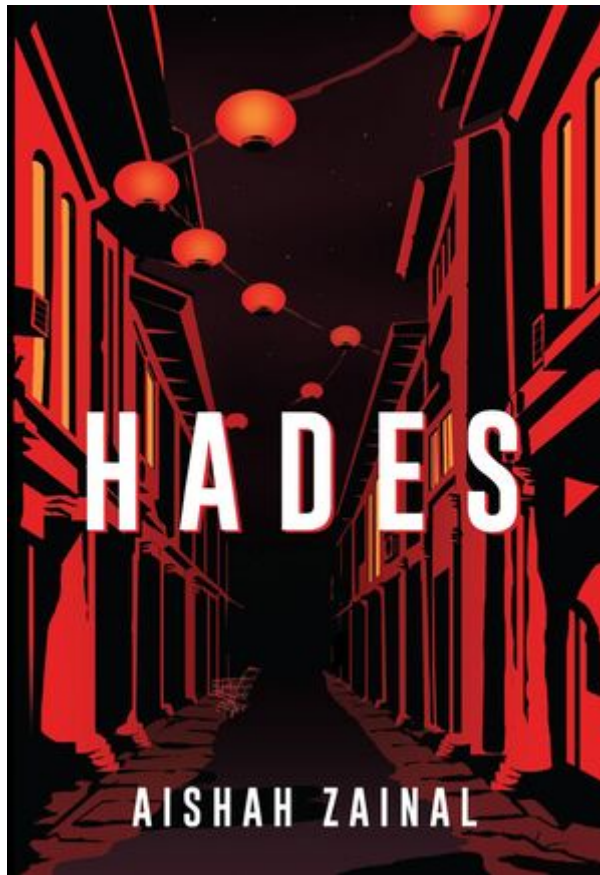
"I truly didn't see it coming," says the 27-year-old Ipoh-based teacher.

"I was aware of my nomination last October, but didn't have any high expectations. I'm just glad to have been nominated," she adds.

Hades, released early last year by [local publisher Gerakbudaya](#), follows 16-year-old troublemaker Kei and his mother, who move into a decaying low-cost flat and become neighbours to young mother Maryam and her three-year-old son Ishak. Shunned by society, Kei and Maryam develop an unspoken bond, which starts to fray as the ghosts of their pasts circle in.

"At its core, *Hades* is a tale of the underdogs - of those living in poverty and what it does to people, especially women," explains Aishah.

Aishah's mother and her late grandfather, both bookworms, had a great influence on her while growing up.



Aishah's debut novel 'Hades' has been longlisted for the Dublin Literary Award 2024.

Photo : Gerakbudaya

"My grandfather was not only a book lover, but something of a writer himself, though his works remained unpublished. He was a simple guy who mowed the lawn and trimmed lotus plants in the Taiping Lake Gardens, but he still had big dreams.

"Unfortunately, he passed away in 1983 and never got to realise his dream as a writer. In a way, *Hades* is dedicated to him – it's about lost potential due to poverty," she shares.

Chong Ton Sin, managing director of Gerakbudaya, says the publishing house is grateful for the book's inclusion in the longlist and would like to thank everyone involved in its production, as well as the National Library, which nominated it for the award.

"As a socially conscious publishing house, we strive to highlight the stories and the narratives that have often been ignored by mainstream society.

"With *Hades* being longlisted for the award, we hope it may encourage more books like this to be published and be recognised by the wider society to take action toward a better future," adds Chong.

Sponsored by Dublin City Council, the Dublin Literary Award, which is now in its 29th year, is the world's most valuable annual prize for a single work of fiction published in English, worth €100,000 (RM513,120) to the winner. If the winning book has been translated, the author receives €75,000 (RM384,840) and the translator receives €25,000 (RM128,300).

The longlist is compiled from nominations by libraries across 35 countries in Africa, Europe, Asia, the US, Canada, South America, Australia and New Zealand. This year's longlist features 70 titles, including 31 novels in translation and 16 debut novelists. The shortlist will be revealed on March 26,

and the winner will be announced on May 23.

Hanis Maketab

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<https://www.thestar.com.my/lifestyle/culture/2024/01/18/malaysian-teacher039s-debut-novel-makes-dublin-literary-award-2024-longlist?fbclid=IwAR1UgwBk2LDs4yh4FMkjal6iytAqyZavhFzKIUyvkTfbBKe9CdVpD1A0mRo>