



### ***The Girl at the Back of the Bus* – Suzette D. Harrison**

It's 1955. Mattie Banks is boarding a bus that will take her to Miss Celestine's. Mattie is only sixteen, but finds herself in a difficult position. She's pregnant and on her way to secretly get rid of the unwanted child. But there with her in the "Colored" section of the bus is Miss Rosa Parks, who refuses to give up her seat to a white person and is taken off the bus. Unknowingly, Rosa Parks changes Mattie's life for good, as she decides to keep her baby. Mattie tries to hide her changing body, until her mother finds out. An unmarried black girl who's having a baby! What would everybody think of her?

Then there is Ashlee Turner, a young black woman striving for a great career as a lawyer, only to be turned down because of the colour of her skin. Ashlee takes a leave of absence and travels to her family. Her grandmother Mattie is very ill and doesn't have much time left. While worrying about her grandmother, Ashlee suddenly realises that she's missed her period. She takes a pregnancy test and finds out that she is expecting. How is it possible for someone like her, determined to establish a great career, to find herself pregnant? How will her boyfriend take the news?

Under a couple of floorboards Ashlee discovers a manuscript written by her grandmother. It's a great work of fiction—or maybe not?

*The Girl at the Back of the Bus* is a gripping story that had me tearing up from time to time. Its main themes of racism and women's rights make it an important read in these disturbing times, in which the Black Lives Matter movement is calling for racial justice.

Author Suzette D. Harrison shows her readers how, over recent decades, the lives of black women have got better or easier, more equal to those of white women, but that they are still not at the same level. She does so by comparing a grandmother's and granddaughter's similar situations, which have very different outcomes.

Harrison gives her story a powerful start by introducing the historical figure of Rosa Parks. Even though she doesn't have a key role during the story, she is the crucial element that causes Mattie's life to drastically change, thus providing us readers with a beautiful and at the same time heartbreaking novel.

A little warning for those who read on an empty stomach: the frequent mentions of Mattie's world-famous teacakes will have you licking your lips and your stomach growling with hunger throughout the book! I do sincerely hope that Harrison will share the recipe, because I for one would love to start baking them!

Who is Suzette D. Harrison?

The American poet and author Harrison grew up in California. Her first literary success stems from her high school years, in which she was praised for her poetry. Among her inspirations she has cited authors Toni Morrison and Maya Angelou. Harrison is an author of different genres, including children's books, romance and women's fiction. But most of all she likes to write African American historical fiction.

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