

In a young adult narrative, Anything could happen: analysis of the book by Will Walton¹

En una narrativa juvenil, Todo puede suceder: análisis del libro de Will Walton
Em uma narrativa juvenil, Tudo pode acontecer: análise do livro de Will Walton

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Abstract

Anything Could Happen is a North American young adult novel written by Will Walton in 2015 and which, in Brazil, was published by V&R. In this work, the objective was to identify the communicative-cultural potential of the book, through a structural and contextual analysis of the narrative. For this, the qualitative and interpretative-analytical approach methodology was adopted, starting from the script by [Gancho \(2006\)](#) and expanding to cultural dimensions. The theoretical foundation was anchored in narrative studies, based on [Todorov \(2011\)](#), Genette (2011), and [Barthes \(2011\)](#), in addition to studies of children's and young adult literature, based on [Kohan \(2013\)](#), [Costa \(2009\)](#), and [Coelho \(2000\)](#). The results showed that, in addition to the conventional narrative categories (plot, temporality, places, narrator, and discourse), it was possible to detect linguistic, social, historical, and artistic-cultural references.

Keywords: Narrative analysis; North American literature; young adult novel.

Resumen

Todo puede suceder es una novela juvenil estadounidense escrita por Will Walton en 2015 y que, en Brasil, fue publicada por V&R. En este trabajo, el objetivo fue identificar el potencial comunicativo-cultural de la obra, a través de un análisis estructural y contextual de la narrativa. Para ello, se adoptó una metodología de enfoque cualitativo e interpretativo-analítico, partiendo del guión de [Gancho \(2006\)](#) y ampliándose a dimensiones culturales. La fundamentación teórica estuvo anclada en los estudios narrativos, con base en [Todorov \(2011\)](#), Genette (2011) y [Barthes \(2011\)](#), además de estudios de literatura infantil y juvenil, a partir de [Kohan \(2013\)](#), [Costa \(2009\)](#) y [Coelho \(2000\)](#). Los resultados mostraron que, además de las categorías narrativas convencionales (trama, temporalidad, escenario, narrador y discurso), fue posible detectar referencias lingüísticas, sociales, históricas y artístico-culturales.

Palabras clave: Análisis narrativo; literatura norteamericana; romance juvenil.

¹ Translation reviewer: Jordana de Santi Alves.

Resumo

Tudo pode acontecer é um romance juvenil norte-americano escrito por Will Walton em 2015 e que, no Brasil, foi publicado pela editora V&R. Neste trabalho, objetivou-se identificar o potencial comunicativo-cultural da obra, por meio de uma análise estrutural e contextual da narrativa. Para isso, adotou-se a metodologia de abordagem qualitativa e interpretativo-analítica, partindo do roteiro de Gancho (2006) e expandindo para dimensões culturais. A fundamentação teórica ancorou-se nos estudos de narrativa, tendo como base Todorov (2011), Genette (2011) e Barthes (2011), além dos estudos de literatura infantil e juvenil, tendo como base em Kohan (2013), Costa (2009) e Coelho (2000). Os resultados apontaram que, para além das categorias convencionais da narrativa (enredo, temporalidade, ambientação, narrador e discurso), foi possível detectar referências linguísticas, sociais, históricas e artístico-culturais.

Palabras-chave: Análise narrativa; literatura Norte-Americana; romance juvenil.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Anything Could Happen is an American young adult novel written by Will Walton in 2015, with the central theme revolving around the protagonist Richard Farm III, better known as Tretch, discovering his sexuality. In Brazil, the book was published in the same year by the publisher Vergara e Ribas (V&R) in the traditional paperback format, containing 246 pages, and translated by Fabrício Waltrick.

From the reading of this work, the question arises: what elements make this narrative function and tend to pique the interest of adolescent readers? Therefore, this work aims to identify the communicative and cultural potential of the work through a structural and contextual analysis. The specific objectives include examining conventional narrative categories and observing linguistic, social, historical, and artistic characteristics.

To achieve this, a qualitative methodology, primarily based on bibliographic and documentary sources with an interpretative-analytical approach, was adopted. In other words, it started with the narrative analysis framework proposed by Cândida Vilares Gancho (2006), which involves describing elements such as plot, temporality, setting, narrator, and discourse. This analysis expanded to include the cultural dimensions that contextualize the work within its production context.

The theoretical foundation was based on narrative studies, drawing on the works of Tzvetan Todorov (2011), Gérard Genette (2011), and Roland Barthes (2011), as well as studies in children's and young adult literature, with a basis in Kohan (2013), Costa (2009), and Coelho (2000). Subsequently, the research object was described, followed by an analysis and discussion of the results, leading to the final considerations of the work.

2. NARRATIVE STUDIES

In the late 1960s, Bulgarian philosopher Tzvetan Todorov coined the term "Narratology²" for a field of study that has existed in the West for at least four centuries Before the Common Era³. While in antiquity Aristotle proposed examining theatrical plays and epic

poems based on how they were crafted (classical poetics), in modern times, formalists and structuralists updated concepts, expanded the subject matter, and paved the way for contemporary narrative studies by neo-formalists and neo-structuralists.

To succinctly define narrative, we can turn to literary theorist Gérard Genette (2011, p. 265), who sees narrative as "[...] the representation of an event or a series of events, whether real or fictitious, through language". French semiotician Roland Barthes (2011, p. 20), on the other hand, suggests that narrative can be viewed as "[...] a simple accumulation of events [...]" or as a phenomenon that "[...] shares with other narratives a structure accessible to analysis". Brazilian scholar Milton José Pinto (2011, p. 14) proposes that narrative is "[...] a transphrastic connotative system, a mythology that can blend into various forms to create a discourse".

Considering the idea of systems, Lithuanian semiotician Algirdas Julius Greimas (2011, p. 65) argues that narrative should be seen as an algorithm, a succession of statements whose predicate functions linguistically simulate a set of goal-oriented behaviors. In line with this, French linguist Claude Bremond (2011, p. 118) asserts: "Every narrative consists of a discourse that integrates a succession of human-interest events into the unity of a single action."

The relationship between succession, integration, and human interest can be observed in the connection between what the narrative tells and how it is told. In this regard, Todorov reintroduces notions of *inventio* and *dispositio* from classical rhetoric and *fabula* and *syuzhet* from Russian formalism to propose the concepts of "story" and "discourse" for understanding a narrative work. According to the author, understanding the story means that the narrative "[...] evokes a certain reality, events that would have happened, characters who, from this perspective, merge with real-life ones" (Todorov, 2011, p. 220). Understanding the discourse, on the other hand, means that "[...] it's not just the events that are being recounted that matter but the way in which the narrator makes us aware of them" (Todorov, 2011, p. 221).

Building on Todorov's perception, Barthes (2011, p. 26) summarizes that the story encompasses "[...] a logic of actions and a 'syntax' of characters [...]" while discourse relates to "[...] the tenses, aspects, and modes of the narrative". The importance of this logic lies in the assertions of Bremond (2011, p. 118), who states: "Where there is no succession, there is no narrative [...]. Where there is no integration into the unity of a single action, there is no narrative [...]. Where there is no implication of human interest, there can be no narrative."

In the context of the media-driven world in which we are immersed, the concept of narrative expands beyond the relationship between succession, integration, and human interest, encompassing the idea of mediation provided by means of communication. In a Brazilian dictionary compiled by communication scholar *Ciro Marcondes Filho* (2014, p. 356), narrative is described as "[...] a mediated realization of language that aims to communicate a series of events to one or more interlocutors, in order to share experiences and knowledge and broaden the pragmatic context".

Expanding on this central idea, the entry by journalist *Daisi Irmgard Vogel* (2014, p. 356) emphasizes the relevance of this cultural product for human communication. "Narrative and language are thus understood as two of the main processes of culture, forming and being formed within the extensive intertextual network of meanings." Furthermore, the author highlights: "In the past century, narrative has been studied as a widely disseminated cultural

² The term first appeared in *The Grammar of the Decameron* (*Grammaire du Décaméron*), originally published in 1969.

³ For scientific and academic purposes, we use the expression "Before the Common Era (BCE)" to refer to what is commonly known as "Before Christ (BC)."

practice [...], allowing for the ordering and giving meaning to events and the experience of the world and our own inscription within it" (Vogel, 2014, p. 356).

Based on this conception, we can recall the reflections of German essayist Walter Benjamin (1987, p. 201), who claims that the source of all narratives lies in experience: "The narrator takes from experience what he tells: his own experience or that reported by others. And he incorporates the things narrated into the experience of his listeners." Anchored in this Benjaminian view, researchers Tarcyanie Cajueiro Santos and Míriam Cristina Carlos Silva (2014, p. 357) argue that contemporary narratives "[...] express a type of experience that corresponds to an urban and industrial society, whose pace of life is felt through accelerated time, which consumes the slowness of experiences and collective memories, centered on the common narrative between the narrator and the listener".

According to Barthes (2011, p. 21), "[...] no one can compose (produce) a narrative without referring to an implicit system of units and rules". Considering this argument, when examining a media product based on its form or structure, we begin to see it as "[...] a set of elements and seek to define the relationships between these elements in a model" (Pinto, 2011, p. 8).

According to Pinto (2011, p. 8), "[...] it makes no sense to talk about a theory that does not lead to a concrete analysis praxis, or a collection of heuristic procedures that are not guided by a logically primary conceptual relevance". For this reason, we understand that narrative theory (presented in this section) is necessary to advance the proposed narrative analysis methodologies (presented later), just as narrative analysis needs to draw from narrative theory to establish itself and generate the expected knowledge.

3. CHILDREN'S AND YOUNG ADULT LITERATURE STUDIES

Although younger than traditional "literatures," Children's and Young Adult Literature (CYAL) has increasingly become a solid and established field of study, as can be seen through a quick exploratory search in a database. As of February 22, 2023, the Capes Periodicals Portal (Brazil) yielded 8,696 results for the term "*literatura infantil*" ("children's literature") and 3,060 results for the term "*literatura juvenil*" ("young adult literature").

Among the most relevant articles according to the platform, we can mention Emanuel Verdade da Madalena's study (2017) on transgender themes in books for children from various countries and authors. According to the research, this type of narrative only began to emerge in the 2010s and is still invisible in literary circles. The work argues that, even though such themes may arise independently or through self-publishing and there is an attempt to erase them from society, it is essential that these approaches are undertaken to combat transphobia, especially among young people.

In the realm of literature for adolescents, the standout is Clara Mengolini's study (2020) on conflict and racial identity in Latin American literature, focusing on the book "La Marca en la Tierra" by Argentine writer Graciela Rendón. The researcher delves into the experience of a Mapuche character who navigates between the common world — family, the countryside, and animals — and the "white" world — school, teachers, and friends. According to the research, the book can motivate the process of self-construction of personality, something integral for young readers.

Writing for children and adolescents, therefore, goes beyond inventing fictional stories or arranging rhymed thoughts in verse; there is an entire social, cultural, and educational context behind these stories and poems. To present some thoughts on this subject, we turn to the

insights provided by [Silvia Adela Kohan \(2013\)](#), an Argentine philologist and author of several books focused on literary techniques:

A children's book or story should appeal to both adults and children. Writing for children is as serious as writing for adults. It requires commitment and the same emotional involvement. It leads us to face the same obstacles and difficulties. Children's literature is not a means but an end in itself. We must write for children with authenticity and passion. ([Kohan, 2013, p. 09](#)).

In the context of the educational and literary environment, educators and writers also share their impressions on writing for children and adolescents. Roger Cousinet, a pioneering French educator in the country's progressive educational system, emphasizes the importance of understanding the child's world, where objects have multiple meanings and are constantly transforming. Writing for young people should capture this imagination and fluidity, recognizing that things are not always what they seem:

The world we live in is not the world that children know. Objects are not the same as those for adults. They are what they are, but they can also become other things. A doll is also a little girl; a chair is a chair and also a car, or a train carriage, or a steamship; a cane is a cane and also a horse; the body itself is a human body and at certain times will be the body of an animal. Transformations happen all the time. It is not just what it appears to be, and things exist forever, and beings change appearance without warning. (Quoted by [Kohan, 2013, p. 09](#)).

Astrid Lindgren, a Swedish author of children's books translated into over eighty languages and disseminated in more than a hundred countries, stresses the golden rule of not underestimating children's intelligence. Children's books can contain elements that appeal to both children and adults but should not contain messages or nuances that go over children's understanding:

A children's book can contain enjoyable episodes for both children and adults. We can also write things that are incomprehensible to adults, intended exclusively for children, but it is entirely forbidden to wink at adults over the children's heads. (Quoted by [Kohan, 2013, p. 10](#)).

Maria Teresa León, a Spanish writer and social activist who has always been involved in political and feminist fronts, emphasizes the importance of writing with genuine consideration for children, renewing fables and stories to make them relevant for young people, incorporating elements that nurture their imagination:

It is necessary to write books not only for children but truly thinking about them. I believe, like Ramón Basterra, that it is necessary to renew fables, considering adults and children; fairies must return to the world that men have created. (Quoted by [Kohan, 2013, p. 13](#)).

Emilio Pascual, a Spanish philologist, writer, editor, and literary critic, discusses the idea that young adult literature should transcend reality, offering a comprehensible architecture, an ever-expanding repertoire, and even formal games and transgressions. The goal is to create literature that is accessible to children and, at the same time, a work of art:

A comprehensible architecture, a continually expanding repertoire, games, and formal transgressions: books, in short, that do not depict reality but transcend it, universalizing it; literature that can be read by children but that dispenses with the necessary conditions for the realization of an authentic work of art. (Quoted by [Kohan, 2013, p. 14](#)).

Miquel Desclot, a Catalan translator and founding member of the writers' collective *Ofèlia Dracs* in the mid-1970s, emphasizes the importance of poetic language in children's

literature, even when in prose. He highlights the need to maintain playful and accessible language, avoiding excessive abstractions and promoting children's interest through riddles and metaphorical elements:

Children's poetry should not contain excessive abstraction or require a very complex life experience. On the other hand, it should emphasize the playful aspect, something that captures children's interest. By proposing a riddle, I am setting metaphorical language in circulation. (Quoted by [Kohan, 2013, p. 14](#))

Gloria Fuertes, a Spanish poet known for her involvement in the Postismo literary movement — a sort of marginal literature that aimed to blend existing avant-garde movements — emphasizes that the language used in children's writing should be simple and understandable for children. She highlights the importance of testing her writings with children to ensure that the content is fun and suitable for the young audience:

The content of the story you are going to tell must be easily understood by children. It is our obligation to use simple and accessible language. When I write, I see myself surrounded by four or five children, and I read my drafts to them. If they don't laugh, and if I don't find what I'm telling enjoyable, I tear it all up and start over. (Quoted by [Kohan, 2013, p. 14](#)).

Finally, German writer Michael Ende, famous for his forays into fantasy stories, argues that literature for young readers should focus on pleasure and delight, rather than serving solely as a pedagogical resource. He believes that stories should address fundamental questions of life in an artistic and poetic manner, without purely educational intentions:

Everything that great philosophers and thinkers have done was to reflect on the age-old questions of children: 'Where did I come from?' 'Why am I in the world?' 'Where am I going?' 'What is the meaning of life?' [...] It is to this child that exists within me and within all of us that I speak when I tell my stories. By the way, for whom else or for what better reason would I have to do what I do? Thus, I have no pedagogical or didactic intention in my work. What you find in my books is the result of a purely artistic and poetic choice. (Quoted by [Kohan, 2013, p. 15](#)).

In summary, according to professionals in the field, writing for children and adolescents should take into account the perspective of young readers, maintain accessible language, stimulate imagination, provide pleasure, and explore fundamental life themes artistically. It can be playful, poetic, and innovative, as long as it respects the understanding and interests of the young audience.

Returning to theoretical studies on CYAL, its contemporary aspect tends to focus on the individual reader, turning towards enjoyment and experimentation in narrative language, according to [Marta Morais da Costa \(2009\)](#). It also explores playfulness, the adventure of human knowledge, and challenges stereotypes, attempting to break down prejudices against women, the elderly, artists, and children.

Commonly used as synonyms, the terms "child", "middle-grade", and "young adult" have their own characteristics, which are continuously explored by literary studies. According to [Nelly Novaes Coelho \(2000\)](#), one of the field's leading authors, based on Experimental Psychology studies, they can be classified as follows: "Children's Literature" includes themes for children in the phases of early and late childhood, referred to as "pre-readers", "beginning readers", and "readers in process"; "Middle-Grade Literature" encompasses themes for pre-adolescents, known as "fluent readers"; and "Young Adult Literature" addresses themes for adolescents, referred to as "critical readers".

In early childhood, the "cradle reader" is becoming familiar with the world around them. This is the phase of "inventing the hand", where touch and affection predominate and

curiosity leads to everything within reach becoming an object of exploration. At this point, the child begins to acquire language and name their environment. To encourage this, illustrations of animals or objects from their everyday life are excellent additions to their playful universe. This is where the child begins to integrate the natural and cultural worlds, forming an initial understanding of the space in which they live.

In the second childhood phase, the "playful reader" is in a period where vital and sensory values are prominent. Books for this phase should be predominantly visual, with images that evoke familiar situations. Humor, anticipation, and mystery are essential, as is repetition to maintain focus.

The beginning reader is now venturing into the world of letters. They are starting to understand alphabetic signs and syllabic structures. Socialization and rationalization of reality deepen during this stage. Ideal books have a predominance of images over text, which should be structured with simple words and short sentences. Furthermore, stories with clear beginnings, middles and ends, well-defined characters, and plots that stimulate the imagination are essential.

With mastery of the reading mechanism, the reader in progress has a keen interest in knowledge. Books for this stage balance images and text, presenting narratives centered on challenges to be overcome. Humor remains a strong ally, as well as a balance between reality and imagination.

In the stage of the fluent reader, abstract thinking and reflection intensify. Books now have more complex language, focusing on humanized characters and stories that blend reality and fantasy. Stories about heroes, legends, science fiction, among others, are particularly attractive.

Finally, the critical reader, with complete mastery of reading and profound reflection, seeks texts that challenge their worldview and sharpen their creative writing. These adolescents are looking for deeper connections with the world and others, navigating a web of (often contradictory) values. Books in this stage should go beyond pleasure and emotion, encouraging a critical and profound analysis of literature and the world around them.

Following this line of reasoning and as presented in a previous oral communication (Hergesel, 2022), we understand "children's productions" as works intended for those who identify as children; "middle-grade," for those who identify as pre-adolescents; and "young adult," for those who identify as adolescents. Age ranges can be mentioned (0-9 for the first group, 10-11 for the second, and 12 and older for the third), but they are not exact, considering the individual cognitive development of each human being.

What can be called "children's literature" has some specific characteristics, according to Coelho (2000), such as: images that suggest significant situations; clear lines and masses of color that are visually communicative; the presence of humor and an atmosphere of anticipation or mystery; frequent use of repetition techniques; narrative linearity (beginning, middle, and end) that allows the recognition of the central conflict; a preference for a Manichean worldview; stimulation of the imaginative, intellectual, and emotional aspects of the audience; and direct and objective speech and dialogue.

Continuing from Coelho's perspective, texts of "middle-grade literature" have characteristics that include: the presence of clearly delineated heroes and villains; idealism in character construction; a challenge to intelligence in narrative development; a focus on adventure and sentimentality as story drivers; the resurrection of myths and legends; a preference for magical realism, science fiction, and detective stories as narrative guides; the beginning of romantic relationships and first loves; and more elaborate speech and dialogue, even in colloquial style. According to Coelho (2000), this segment offers the greatest thematic

variety, blending the ludic-affective with contextualized reality and more opportunities for narrative exploration.

Finally, the narratives of "young adult literature", the focus of this work, have characteristics that motivate critical thinking and reflection; the presence of complex or ambiguous characters; no limitation of enjoyment based solely on pleasure and emotion; and the need to broaden readings of the world, incorporating socially relevant themes. Critical readers must have basic knowledge of literary theory, including the primary narrative categories (characters, plot, narrator, time, and space).

4. CONTEMPORARY STUDIES OF YOUNG ADULT NARRATIVE

The complexity in the study of young adult literature, as highlighted by [Maria Madalena Marcos Carlos Teixeira da Silva \(2012\)](#), is due to its specific communicative and enunciative nature, often overlooked in studies that group it with children's literature. The lack of a precise definition for the concept of "young adult literature" does not invalidate the category but encourages research to identify distinctive features in these texts. It is more productive to create a descriptive framework of recurring features and values in young adult works, considering their evolution over time, the heterogeneity of the subject, and the fluidity of the boundaries of young adult literature.

As evidenced by [Rachel Falconer \(2009\)](#), the popularity of this literary segment contrasts with the classical perception that young adult literature had a limited and transient audience. The adolescent protagonists portrayed in this type of narrative often embody an intriguing duality: on the one hand, they seem precociously sophisticated, almost indistinguishable from adults who witness the abject in life; on the other hand, they often blend this appearance of sophistication with an essence of inexperience and greater innocence.

[Ana Margarida Ramos and Diana Navas \(2015\)](#) argue that young adult literature, driven by the global aspect of contemporaneity, offers complex stories that challenge traditional binary oppositions and moral simplicity. It engages readers in narratives with multiple layers and often open and ambiguous endings. Furthermore, literary style and language are increasingly sophisticated and appealing, attracting a diverse range of readers.

[Sandra L. Beckett \(2009\)](#) explains that books intended for adolescents, when compared to those intended for adults, reveal remarkable similarities in terms of structure and style, suggesting that they can be equally relevant to readers of different age groups. The recurring theme of the transition from adolescence to adulthood permeates these narratives, exploring the process of young people understanding the adult world.

This is one of the reasons why [Silva \(2012\)](#) emphasizes the importance of valuing the pleasure of reading instead of focusing on technical classifications. She stresses that literary reading should not be conditioned by erudite knowledge and that young adult works can be equally valuable for young and adult readers. Young adult narratives often exist on the fringes of the literary canon, but this diverse perspective can help rediscover and appreciate works that resonate with the common reader, regardless of their age or background.

For [Ramos and Navas \(2015\)](#), young adult narratives stand out due to their transgression of thematic and generic boundaries, bringing together apparently distinct audiences. They require readers to engage in profound reflection on multiple dimensions, exploring themes ranging from religious and metaphysical questions to political and scientific topics, addressing divisive universes and taboo subjects, such as sex, violence, and death. In this sense, it

is noteworthy that these works are accepted by audiences not exclusively composed of adolescent readers, giving rise to the phenomenon of "crossover literature".

Adopting the concept of "crossover", [Falconer \(2009\)](#) shows that contemporary young adult fiction demonstrates a deep interest in abjection, the duality of threatened and reaffirmed psychic identity. This helps explain the increase in the readership of this genre. Adults, who also face transition challenges in their lives, may find in this literature a new arena to explore the horrors and complexities of existence, often resonating with their own childhood and adolescent experiences, as well as their current adult life dilemmas. In summary, contemporary young adult fiction offers a mirror for the anxieties and ambiguities of life in an ever-changing world.

The fact that it transcends age barriers and challenges traditional categories is also discussed extensively by [Beckett \(2009\)](#). For her, stories that focus on the transition from one life stage to another attract not only adolescent readers but also adults. They address universal issues of change and maturation that resonate with people of different ages. The phenomenon of books intended for adolescents finding adult readers and vice versa is a manifestation of the complex interaction between the "infantilization" of adults and the "adultization" of children and young people in contemporary society. This convergence of audiences reflects the increasing sophistication of young adult literature and highlights how the boundaries between adolescence and adulthood are becoming increasingly fluid.

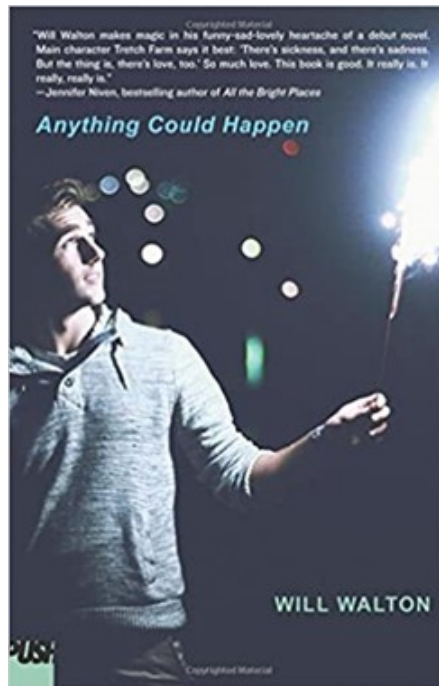
As for the themes addressed in young adult fiction, [Ramos \(2020\)](#) points out that family and school contexts prevail, with an emphasis on exploring the discovery and construction of identity, as well as issues related to love, friendship, and the beginning of sexual life. However, some authors introduce more complex and challenging themes such as mental illness, immigration, and loss, while adopting narratives that explore multiculturalism and employ various writing styles, further enriching the landscape of young adult literature.

5. RESEARCH OBJECT AND METHODOLOGY

Anything Could Happen was the debut novel by the American author Will Walton, independently published in 2015 by the PUSH publisher. The translated version, titled *Tudo pode acontecer*, reached Brazil through the V&R publisher in 2016. This reflects what [Ana Margarida Ramos \(2020\)](#) observes in the Portuguese literary market: the prevalence of international best-sellers that are translated, indicating that publishers tend to favor books that are proven to be popular and globally successful.

The Brazilian edition features a new cover design: in contrast to the profiled boy holding an explosive candle against a black background ([Figure 1](#)), it presents the half-face of a relaxed boy with headphones against a white background ([Figure 2](#)). The original cover also uses a more classic font and includes elements like a positive critique. The Brazilian cover, oppositely, uses a serif font and prominently features the slogan "When you're in love with the wrong person for the right reasons, anything could happen", which originally opened the back cover text.

Figure 1. Original book cover



Source: [Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com)

Figure 2. Brazilian book cover



Source: [Amazon.com.br](https://www.amazon.com.br)

In a printed review on the original cover, the writer Jennifer Niven, the author of best-sellers recognized by The New York Times, states that "Will Walton makes magic in his

funny-sad-lovely heartache of a debut novel, *Anything Could Happen*. [...] This book is good. It really is. It really, really is" (as mentioned in [Indiebound, 2015, n. p.](#)).

Writer David Levithan, known for his young adult fiction with LGBTQ+ protagonists, provides commentary more focused on editorial matters. In his view, "PUSH is proud to introduce a phenomenal debut about the unpredictable, unbearable, and ultimately amazing trajectory of falling in love and falling into the right place" (as mentioned in [Indiebound, 2015, n. p.](#)).

The entertainment portal BuzzFeed, present in various countries, connects the book to other young adult successes. According to the editors, "[...] this coming-of-age contemporary reveals an emotionally poignant story that perfectly captures the trials and tribulations of adolescence. It's the perfect follow-up read to any John Green novel" (as mentioned in [Indiebound, 2015, n. p.](#)).

As observed by [Ramos \(2020\)](#) in young adult books, the analyzed work includes comments from renowned critics and authors on the cover, in the case of the original version. Both versions incorporate photographs as well, emphasizing the realistic nature of the narratives, with illustrations used as secondary background elements, while the main focus is on the title and authorship.

When featuring a teenage boy as the main character, it is common to expect a reflection of the structural sexism present in the global historical context. This context teaches boys not to cry, not to suffer, not to express their feelings, constituting what science has termed "toxic masculinity" ([Sculos, 2017](#); [Veissière, 2018](#); [Paula & Rocha, 2019](#)). By revisiting the historical "social construction of masculinity" ([Oliveira, 2004](#)), which over the years has linked men to the image of strong, virile individuals, heads of families, political and religious leaders at the top of the social hierarchy, it becomes evident that "Anything Could Happen" can contribute to a change in this collective imagination.

In this regard, we seek to identify the communicative-cultural potential of the work through a structural and contextual analysis of the narrative, adapting the framework proposed by [Gancho \(2006\)](#). Initially, we examine the four parts that form the plot: exposition, complication, climax, and resolution. We then explore the composition of the main character: participation, physical, psychological, social, ideological, and moral characteristics, and their relationship with other characters. Subsequently, we discuss internal and external time and physical, social, and psychological spaces. We classify the type of narrator, narrative focus, and aspects related to discourse. Finally, we reflect on the linguistic, social, historical, and art-cultural dimensions that permeate and transcend the work.

6. ANALYSIS AND DISCUSSION OF RESULTS

In the exposition of a narrative, there is a brief presentation of the characters, time, and space. In this regard, at the beginning of the work, Tretch is in a church with Matt, his best friend. When they hold hands, he realizes he is in love with him. He begins to experience a double affliction: by keeping his feelings to himself and pretending not to be homosexual, he feels incomplete. Simultaneously, he imagines that revealing his sexuality would cause concerns within his family.

Tretch, whose real name is Richard Farm the Third, is 15 years old and is always dressed in a T-shirt and jeans, with the option of velvet pants and a scarf for colder days. Highly emotional, he is coming to terms with being homosexual. A lover of books and arts in general,

he enjoys dancing and creating choreographies, as well as singing in the church choir. He fears how his Christian family would react if he came out as gay.

Tretch, a middle-class youth, carries only a few coins in his pocket. He doesn't work, but his father owns a company in partnership with Bobby's father, a schoolmate. He frequently visits the bookstore and the café, unless Matt takes him elsewhere. He identifies himself as a Christian but respects sexual diversity, particularly because Matt's parents are gay. Seeking to keep an open mind, he is maturing in his way of observing the world and the people around him.

He exhibits kindness, honesty, and morality. He has a good relationship with his older brother but faces some pressure from his parents, who continually express their desire to see him with a girlfriend and make it clear that they imagine he is a heterosexual teenage womanizer, also called a "player." He frequently has depressive thoughts when he focuses on his feelings, but he also has erotic thoughts when thinking about Matt.

The initial conflict of the work, which generates tension between the characters and characterizes the complication of the plot, occurs when Matt starts to like Amy, a girl from the diner, and asks Tretch to accompany him on their dates. A love triangle emerges until Lana, the girl from the bookstore, gives hints that she is in love with Tretch. In parallel, Bobby bullies Tretch at school because he suspects Tretch is homosexual.

The climax, the most impactful part of the narrative, occurs when Tretch discovers that his father's company is going bankrupt. At this moment, a series of situations unfold: his brother goes to college, his grandfather discovers he has cancer, Matt tells him he's moving to New York, Lana kisses him, and he nearly drowns while attempting one of his suicidal great-uncle's fantasies.

At the end of the story, Tretch's passion for Matt diminishes, resolving many of his adolescent problems. Tretch decides to come out as gay to his brother, Lana, and Matt. He also reconciles with Bobby, who stops the verbal violence. Finally, the conclusion takes place with the character excessively emphasizing that he feels fine, even with all the turbulence around him — clearly alluding to a passage where he argues that overemphasizing is an attempt to disguise his lies.

The novel is entirely narrated in the first person, with a first-person protagonist narrator, making it autodiegetic. This means that the narrative world created is subjective, lived and experienced by the narrator, who presents a story about himself. There is a predominance of direct discourse when the characters speak. In moments when indirect discourse becomes evident, it is clearly marked, which prevents the presence of free indirect discourse, where there is a blend between the narrator's and the character's voices.

Set in contemporary times, the diegetic time corresponds to the period when the work was written, in the second decade of the 21st century. The narrative covers the winter vacation period, spanning a few days before Christmas and extending a few days after New Year's Eve. The target audience consists of teenagers and young adults who identify with or are interested in LGBTI+-themed novels.

The story takes place almost entirely in the small town where Tretch lives, visiting locations such as the school, the bookstore, the café, the art cinema, Matt's house, and the protagonist's own home. The majority of the population consists of middle-class individuals with conservative thoughts and respect for local traditions. This exerts a certain social pressure on Tretch to conform to the expectations of the heteronormative society present there. A portion of the narrative occurs at his grandfather's farm and there are also explicit references to New York.

The use of analogies and terms from the rural setting reinforces the regionalist and small-town character of the narrative, marking a linguistic dimension. The best example is the protagonist's name: Richard Farm the Third. "Farm," in English, is directly linked to rural life, while "The Third", in the original language, harks back to tradition and conservatism, almost comparing Tretch's family to a dynasty with a name passed down through generations.

Three social issues are evident in the narrative, all related to sexuality. The first one is the bullying that Tretch faces in school simply because he is presumed to be homosexual. The second is homophobia, not only present in Bobby's actions but also within his home and in other people in Tretch's social context. Finally, the third is the representation of a same-sex relationship, exemplified by Matt's parents, who are men and married, demonstrating that it's possible to be happy by being true to oneself.

There is also a historical perspective as Tretch reflects on the past of the United States and notes the conservative views that were prevalent in the country for many years. He comments on how things started to change, expressing more liberal views — during the mid-2010s, when the country transitioned from being governed by Republican George W. Bush to being governed by Democrat Barack Obama.

Additionally, there are noticeable artistic and cultural references, which manifest not only in Tretch's love for singing and dancing but also in books, films, and music. Titles such as "The Great Gatsby" by F. Scott Fitzgerald, "On The Road" by Jack Kerouac, and "A Separate Peace" by John Knowles come up in dialogues between Tretch and Lana. The cult version of the film "King Kong" and the multi-instrumental singer Ellie Goulding are also mentioned.

The mention of Ellie is also justified because, in 2013, two years before the publication of "Anything Could Happen", the singer released a song with the same title, whose lyrics discuss themes related to struggle and secret passion, which are pertinent to the narrative. For instance, the opening lines go: "Stripped to the waist / We fall into the river / Cover your eyes / So you don't know the secret / I've been trying to hide."

7. FINAL REMARKS

Narratives do not have an end in themselves. All literary or media creations, more than text, carry the imprint of their circulation context. With young adult novels, this is no different. While the structuralist formula for studying narratives still proves effective in descriptive and interpretive aspects, the mediations proposed by narratives require reflections and consultations on linguistic, social, historical, and artistic-cultural issues within their production context.

In the case of "Anything Could Happen", it is evident that the narrative is constructed in a traditional manner, faithfully containing the narrative categories proposed since the formalist studies of the 1960s. However, there is also an effort to introduce into the text situations that go beyond the potential stasis imagined by literary scholars of the past.

Regarding a book with a young adult appeal, "Anything Could Happen" incorporates linguistic features designed to engage the interest of teenage readers, starting with the choice of its protagonist narrator's name. The presented themes also align with the contemporary reality of teenagers, not only in the United States but globally, who need to grapple with family, school, and especially personal issues.

By offering references to other books, "Anything Could Happen" expands the intertextual potential of the work, suggesting to the reader a quest for the books, films, and music mentioned, which can even justify aspects of the plot. In summary, even though it is not a

fragmented narrative, the fact that it involves societal and cultural issues turns the book into a puzzle, promoting reflection and critical thinking.

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