

## **A Reagan-Era Novel for the Trump Resistance:**

### **Jane Langton's *The Fragile Flag***

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In a 1994 interview, Jane Langton claimed *The Fragile Flag* (1984) as her favorite among all her books, whether for children or adults, because of its connection to political protest. Certainly it is an anomaly as part of the Hall Family Chronicles, her series of Transcendentalist fantasies, in that it contains only the slightest of fantasy elements but rather focuses on a realistically depicted children's movement for social justice.

*The Fragile Flag* was written against President Reagan's Star Wars Initiative, offering a president who proposes to put nuclear missiles into space. Fourth grader Georgie Hall decides to march from Concord, Massachusetts, to Washington, D.C., to deliver a letter of protest to the President. As word of her crusade spreads, the movement grows until there are several thousand children descending on the White House to make their voices heard.

The text provides both a blueprint for effective child-centered resistance and an understanding of the obstacles in the way of organized efforts, including inclement weather, secret attempts to subvert the campaign, and the logistic difficulties of feeding thousands of protestors. This paper will examine the campaign generated by the children of Concord, the applicability of the narrative to 21<sup>st</sup>-century conditions, and possible links to the thought of Henry David Thoreau, whose figure always looms over the stories of the Hall Family.