Pairing Literature and Primary Sources

Source: “Pairing Children’s Literature and Primary Sources” by Tom Bober (May 2021 - School Library Journal)

Why Pair?
Pairing primary sources with literature can help students explore fiction using a unique, real-world perspective. The historical item can connect students to the author and the world when the story was written.

Inspirations
When working with historically-based nonfiction and fiction, students may use a selected set of primary sources to look for evidence that the author’s connection to the same items.

Character Traits
When characters are portrayed as historical figures, students can analyze primary sources to identify traits of the individuals, location, or time period.

Connection
Pairing children’s literature and primary sources has multiple entry points, heightens student engagement, helps students construct meaning around story and source, and builds connection between the two sources.

Resources
Library of Congress: Primary Sources
https://www.loc.gov/programs/teachers/getting-started-with-primary-sources

National Archives: DocsTeach
https://www.docsteach.org

Interaction
Teaching specific analysis strategies and modeling can assist students in developing the habits of historical thinking when working with these types of sources.