

Explore the Wright Case

Optional research for your hybrid essay - at home or in class. Choose a source that answers a question in your argument. You do not need to read everything or submit extra responses. The class handout and assigned primary sources already meet the minimum source requirement.

1. The full court report | Primary source

[Open the full report](#) or [open just printed pp. 134 and 144](#).

Read: p. 134 for the family's claim and protection against removal; pp. 139-141 for the judges' racial reasoning; p. 142 for reported claims by Hannah and her brother John; p. 144 for the decree. On p. 144, read the decree at the top; stop before "Thomas Walker," which begins another case.

Possible essay use: Test how litigation, family knowledge, and community testimony created opportunities under coercion. On p. 142, the judge reported Hannah's repeated claim to freedom and threats of whipping for raising it. Attribute this to the report; it is not Hannah's own surviving narrative.

Footnote model: *Hudgins v. Wrights*, 11 Va. (1 Hen. & Mun.) 134, 142 (1806), [report URL]. Change 142 to the page you actually use. Printed pp. 134, 142, and 144 are PDF pages 2, 10, and 12 in the full scan.

2. William & Mary case overview | Secondary source hub

[Wythepedia: Hudgins v. Wrights](#).

Read: Background, the two court decisions, and References / External links.

Possible essay use: Clarify the difference between Wythe's reasoning and the appeals court's narrower decision. Follow references to verify claims. Some older external links may have moved.

Footnote model: William & Mary, "Hudgins v. Wrights," *Wythepedia*, [page URL; add your access date if no page date is available]. Cite this page for its explanation, and the court report for the original ruling.

3. Gregory Ablavsky | Scholarly interpretation

[Read "Making Indians 'White'" \(2011\)](#).

Choose: pp. 1491-1494 for the Wright decision; pp. 1513-1514, "The Enslaved Plaintiffs," for agency; pp. 1508-1512 for racial justifications. The introduction on pp. 1458-1462 adds broader context. These are optional selections, not assigned page ranges.

Footnote model: Gregory Ablavsky, "Making Indians 'White': The Judicial Abolition of Native Slavery in Revolutionary Virginia and Its Racial Legacy," *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 159, no. 5 (2011): [specific printed page], [article URL]. Skim footnotes unless you are following a source. Attribute interpretations to Ablavsky rather than treating them as the plaintiffs' words.

Context, Cautions, and Citations

4. Virginia's 1662 law | Primary legal context

[Read the short law transcription at Encyclopedia Virginia](#). The historical title begins "Negro womens children..." and retains racist period language.

Read: the brief editorial introduction and law. It tied a child's free or enslaved condition to the mother's condition.

Possible essay use: Explain why ancestry through women mattered to freedom claims. Distinguish the 1662 rule from the particular arguments and outcome in 1806.

Footnote model: Virginia General Assembly, "Negro womens children to serve according to the condition of the mother" (1662), transcribed in *Encyclopedia Virginia*, [document URL]. If you use the modern introduction, identify it as the editors' explanation rather than language from the law.

5. George Wythe and Slavery | Secondary context with references

[William & Mary: George Wythe and Slavery](#).

Read selectively: the introduction and discussion of freedom cases; use page search for "Hudgins."

Possible essay use: Examine tensions between Wythe's involvement in slavery and his judicial arguments about freedom. Keep the Wright family's actions central; avoid turning your comparison into a judge's biography. Follow the page's notes for evidence.

Footnote model: William & Mary, "George Wythe and Slavery," *Wythepedia*, [page URL; add your access date if no page date is available].

Turn research into analysis

When selecting essay evidence, identify its source and exact location, explain its significance, and consider a limitation. No separate research log is required. Ask: **Does this evidence help me explain a strategy, a constraint, a cost, or an outcome?** Compare it with a specific Jacobs passage. More sources do not automatically make an argument stronger.

Use evidence carefully

The report describes the family through legal claims, witnesses, and judges. It does not establish a specific tribal citizenship or give full access to the women's private thoughts. Physical descriptions reveal the court's racial reasoning; they are not reliable biological tests. A claim made about an ancestor is not automatically proof of every family relationship. Avoid filling gaps with invented details.

Bibliography and final citation check

Article bibliography: Ablavsky, Gregory. "Making Indians 'White': The Judicial Abolition of Native Slavery in Revolutionary Virginia and Its Racial Legacy." *University of Pennsylvania Law Review* 159, no. 5 (2011): 1457-1531. [Article URL].

Webpage bibliography: William & Mary. "Hudgins v. Wrights." *Wythepedia*. [Page date if listed, or your actual access date]. [URL].

Copy the actual URL behind each link into your citations. Replace bracketed instructions; do not leave placeholders. Use pinpoint pages in footnotes and the complete article range in the bibliography. See [the essay planner](#) for the court report and other course-source models.

[Return to the two-page class reading](#) | [Full essay assignment](#)