

Courts at Work

Read how Georgia courts interpret laws and administer justice.

SS8CG4.b "Analyze the dual purpose of the judicial branch: to interpret the laws of Georgia and administer justice in our legal system."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline two details that show courts interpreting laws. Circle two details that show courts administering justice, then number one sentence that shows both purposes working together.

Two Jobs, One Branch

- ① In Georgia, courts do more than decide who wins an argument. Judges interpret laws when people disagree about what a law means or whether it fits a situation. They read the Georgia Constitution, laws passed by the General Assembly, and earlier court decisions. For example, a dispute may ask whether a state rule applies to a new kind of online sale. A court examines the wording and legal limits, then explains how the rule should be understood. This interpretation guides the decision in that case and can guide later courts.
- ② Courts also administer justice by using legal procedures to resolve cases fairly. At a hearing, a judge makes sure each side can present evidence and respond to the other side. In a criminal case, the court protects the accused person's rights and requires the state to prove guilt under the required standard. In a civil case, the court may decide whether one party must pay damages or take another legal action. Court staff schedule proceedings and keep records, helping the system deliver justice.
- ③ These purposes often work together during an appeal. Suppose a lower court ruled that a Georgia law allowed a penalty, but a person argues that the court read the law incorrectly. An appellate court reviews the legal interpretation. It may also consider whether the hearing followed fair procedures, such as allowing both sides to be heard. If the court finds an error, it can uphold the ruling, change it, or send the case back for further action. By interpreting law and checking fairness, Georgia's judicial branch helps resolve disputes under the legal system.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 What sources does a Georgia court read when it needs to interpret a law?

2 How does a judge help administer justice during a hearing? Use two actions from the passage.

3 During an appeal, what does the appellate court review to interpret laws, and what does it consider to administer justice?

4 How can a court's interpretation in one case affect future cases?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

A city rule says that e-scooters may not be used in public parks. A rider receives a citation while using an e-scooter on a paved path near a park. Write four sentences explaining how a court could interpret the rule and administer justice in this case.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline two details that show courts interpreting laws. Circle two details that show courts administering justice, then number one sentence that shows both purposes working together. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	What sources does a Georgia court read when it needs to interpret a law?	The court reads the Georgia Constitution, laws passed by the General Assembly, and earlier court decisions.
2	How does a judge help administer justice during a hearing? Use two actions from the passage.	A judge makes sure each side can present evidence and respond to the other side.
3	During an appeal, what does the appellate court review to interpret laws, and what does it consider to administer justice?	It reviews the lower court's legal interpretation and considers whether the hearing followed fair procedures, including allowing both sides to be heard.
4	How can a court's interpretation in one case affect future cases?	The interpretation can guide later courts.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

The judge would interpret the city rule by deciding whether the paved path is part of the public park. The judge would hear the rider's explanation and the city's evidence about the path. These steps give both sides a fair chance to be heard. The court could dismiss the citation or require payment based on its reading of the rule and the evidence.

Accept equivalent descriptions of interpretation as deciding a law's meaning or application. For the open task, accept reasonable outcomes if the response explains both interpreting the rule and using fair procedures.