

Courts at Work

Read how Georgia courts interpret laws, hear cases, and review decisions.

SS8CG4 "Analyze the role of the judicial branch in Georgia state government."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline three actions that show the role of Georgia's judicial branch, and circle each court named in the passage to connect courts with their work.

How Georgia Courts Serve the State

- ① Georgia's judicial branch settles legal disputes and interprets the Georgia Constitution and state laws. A court does not write laws or enforce them. Instead, judges and juries apply the law to evidence in cases. Courts hear criminal cases, disagreements between people or businesses, and challenges involving government actions. When a person claims that a state law conflicts with the Georgia Constitution, a court can review that claim. This power helps protect constitutional rights and places limits on the other branches of state government.
- ② Georgia has several levels of courts. Trial courts hear witnesses, examine evidence, and make initial decisions. For example, superior courts handle many serious criminal cases, including felony cases, as well as divorce cases and cases about land. State courts handle misdemeanor cases in counties that have them. Probate courts handle matters such as wills, estates, and marriage licenses. Juvenile courts hear cases involving children who are accused of breaking the law or who need protection. Each court's jurisdiction, or legal authority, determines the kinds of cases it may hear.
- ③ If a party believes a trial court made a legal error, that party may appeal. An appeal is not a new trial with new witnesses. An appellate court reviews the record from the earlier case and decides whether the law was applied correctly. The Georgia Court of Appeals reviews many appeals. The Supreme Court of Georgia is the state's highest court and reviews certain cases, including constitutional questions. Through trials and appeals, Georgia's judicial branch gives people a process for resolving disputes and checking whether government actions follow the law.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 Why can a Georgia court review a claim that a state law conflicts with the Georgia Constitution?

2 A case involves a divorce and a disagreement about land. Which court does the passage identify as a court that can handle these cases?

3 How is an appellate court's job different from a trial court's job?

4 What is Georgia's highest court, and what type of question does the passage say it may review?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Imagine that a Georgia resident says a new state law conflicts with the Georgia Constitution. In three sentences, explain how the judicial branch could handle the claim, including what could happen if the resident appeals an initial decision.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline three actions that show the role of Georgia's judicial branch, and circle each court named in the passage to connect courts with their work. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	Why can a Georgia court review a claim that a state law conflicts with the Georgia Constitution?	Reviewing the claim helps protect constitutional rights and limits the other branches of state government.
2	A case involves a divorce and a disagreement about land. Which court does the passage identify as a court that can handle these cases?	Superior court.
3	How is an appellate court's job different from a trial court's job?	A trial court hears witnesses, examines evidence, and makes an initial decision. An appellate court reviews the record from the earlier case to decide whether the law was applied correctly.
4	What is Georgia's highest court, and what type of question does the passage say it may review?	The Supreme Court of Georgia is the highest court. It may review constitutional questions.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

A trial court could hear the resident's claim and apply the Georgia Constitution to the law. If the resident believes the trial court made a legal error, the resident could appeal. An appellate court would review the earlier record, and the Supreme Court of Georgia may review constitutional questions.

Accept a logical explanation that courts interpret the Constitution and review the law, then accurately describes an appeal as review of the earlier record rather than a new trial. Students may name a trial court generally and may appropriately mention the Court of Appeals or the Supreme Court of Georgia.