

Choices After Brown

How Georgia used symbols and policy choices to resist desegregation.

SS8H11.a "Explain Georgia's response to Brown v. Board of Education including the 1956 flag and the Sibley Commission."

NAME _____

DATE _____

1 READ AND MARK _____ Read it twice

YOUR JOB Underline details about the 1956 flag and the Sibley Commission, then write 1 beside flag details and 2 beside commission details to identify two kinds of response to Brown.

Georgia Responds to Brown

- ① In 1954, the U.S. Supreme Court ruled in Brown v. Board of Education that racial segregation in public schools was unconstitutional. Georgia leaders did not quickly accept the decision. Many supported "massive resistance," a set of actions meant to preserve segregated schools. In 1956, Georgia adopted a new state flag that placed the Confederate battle emblem prominently on the design. Many historians view this change as a political statement of resistance to the growing civil rights movement and school desegregation.
- ② Georgia also considered whether it would close public schools rather than integrate them. Governor Ernest Vandiver created the Sibley Commission in 1960 to gather Georgians' views about this choice. The commission held hearings across the state and received thousands of responses. Its findings showed that about 60 percent of respondents preferred closing public schools instead of allowing integration. This result revealed how strongly many people resisted Brown, even though closing schools would deny students public education.
- ③ After studying the responses, the Sibley Commission recommended a local-option approach. Under this idea, local school systems could choose whether to desegregate or to close their public schools. Georgia lawmakers used this approach in 1961, but it did not solve the conflict over Brown. The 1956 flag change was a statewide symbol connected to resistance, while the commission documented public opinion and offered a policy choice. Both actions show that Georgia's response included symbols, investigation, and efforts to delay or avoid integration.

2 ANSWER WITH EVIDENCE _____ Use the passage

1 How did the 1956 state flag change communicate resistance to school desegregation?

2 What did about 60 percent of the people who responded to the Sibley Commission prefer?

3 What was the Sibley Commission's local-option approach?

4 How was the 1956 flag change different from the Sibley Commission's response to Brown?

3 YOUR TURN _____ Your own words

Write a three-sentence museum label explaining Georgia's response to Brown v. Board of Education. Use your own words, and include the 1956 flag, the commission's 60 percent finding, and the local-option recommendation.

PART 1 • READ AND MARK

Underline details about the 1956 flag and the Sibley Commission, then write 1 beside flag details and 2 beside commission details to identify two kinds of response to Brown. Accept any marking that follows this job and points at the right text.

PART 2 • ANSWERS

#	QUESTION	ANSWER
1	How did the 1956 state flag change communicate resistance to school desegregation?	It prominently added the Confederate battle emblem, which many historians view as a political statement resisting the civil rights movement and school desegregation.
2	What did about 60 percent of the people who responded to the Sibley Commission prefer?	They preferred closing public schools rather than allowing integration.
3	What was the Sibley Commission's local-option approach?	It allowed local school systems to choose whether to desegregate or to close their public schools.
4	How was the 1956 flag change different from the Sibley Commission's response to Brown?	The flag change was a statewide symbol of resistance. The commission gathered public opinion and recommended a policy choice for local school systems.

PART 3 • YOUR TURN (SAMPLE ANSWER)

Georgia's 1956 flag prominently displayed the Confederate battle emblem, making it a symbol linked to resistance to desegregation. The Sibley Commission found that about 60 percent of respondents would rather close public schools than integrate them. The commission recommended letting local systems choose integration or closure, showing an effort to avoid or delay integration.

Accept equivalent descriptions of the flag as a symbol of resistance and of the commission as a study of public opinion that recommended local choice. For the open response, require all three named elements and an accurate explanation that the 60 percent preferred closing schools rather than integrating them.