Interpret the Tone- FOMC Statements Answer Key

1. **What differences do you notice between the June and July 2019 FOMC Statements?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| June 19, 2019  Information received since the Federal Open Market Committee met in May indicates that the labor market remains strong and that economic activity is rising at a moderate rate. Job gains have been solid, on average, in recent months, and the unemployment rate has remained low. Although growth of household spending appears to have picked up from earlier in the year, indicators of business fixed investment have been soft. On a 12-month basis, overall inflation and inflation for items other than food and energy are running below 2 percent. Market-based measures of inflation compensation have declined; survey-based measures of longer-term inflation expectations are little changed.  Consistent with its statutory mandate, the Committee seeks to foster maximum employment and price stability. In support of these goals, the Committee decided to maintain the target range for the federal funds rate at 2-1/4 to 2-1/2 percent. The Committee continues to view sustained expansion of economic activity, strong labor market conditions, and inflation near the Committee’s symmetric 2 percent objective as the most likely outcomes, but uncertainties about this outlook have increased. In light of these uncertainties and muted inflation pressures, the Committee will closely monitor the implications of incoming information for the economic outlook and will act as appropriate to sustain the expansion, with a strong labor market and inflation near its symmetric 2 percent objective.  In determining the timing and size of future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the Committee will assess realized and expected economic conditions relative to its maximum employment objective and its symmetric 2 percent inflation objective. This assessment will take into account a wide range of information, including measures of labor market conditions, indicators of inflation pressures and inflation expectations, and readings on financial and international developments.  Voting for the monetary policy action were Jerome H. Powell, Chair; John C. Williams, Vice Chair; Michelle W. Bowman; Lael Brainard; Richard H. Clarida; Charles L. Evans; Esther L. George; Randal K. Quarles; and Eric S. Rosengren. Voting against the action was James Bullard, who preferred at this meeting to lower the target range for the federal funds rate by 25 basis points. | July 31, 2019  Information received since the Federal Open Market Committee met in June indicates that the labor market remains strong and that economic activity has been rising at a moderate rate. Job gains have been solid, on average, in recent months, and the unemployment rate has remained low. Although growth of household spending has picked up from earlier in the year, growth of business fixed investment has been soft. On a 12-month basis, overall inflation and inflation for items other than food and energy are running below 2 percent. Market-based measures of inflation compensation remain low; survey-based measures of longer-term inflation expectations are little changed.  Consistent with its statutory mandate, the Committee seeks to foster maximum employment and price stability. In light of the implications of global developments for the economic outlook as well as muted inflation pressures, the Committee decided to lower the target range for the federal funds rate to 2 to 2-1/4 percent. This action supports the Committee’s view that sustained expansion of economic activity, strong labor market conditions, and inflation near the Committee’s symmetric 2 percent objective are the most likely outcomes, but uncertainties about this outlook remain. As the Committee contemplates the future path of the target range for the federal funds rate, it will continue to monitor the implications of incoming information for the economic outlook and will act as appropriate to sustain the expansion, with a strong labor market and inflation near its symmetric 2 percent objective.  In determining the timing and size of future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the Committee will assess realized and expected economic conditions relative to its maximum employment objective and its symmetric 2 percent inflation objective. This assessment will take into account a wide range of information, including measures of labor market conditions, indicators of inflation pressures and inflation expectations, and readings on financial and international developments.  The Committee will conclude the reduction of its aggregate securities holdings in the System Open Market Account in August, two months earlier than previously indicated.  Voting for the monetary policy action were Jerome H. Powell, Chair; John C. Williams, Vice Chair; Michelle W. Bowman; Lael Brainard; James Bullard; Richard H. Clarida; Charles L. Evans; and Randal K. Quarles. Voting against the action were Esther L. George and Eric S. Rosengren, who preferred at this meeting to maintain the target range for the federal funds rate at 2-1/4 to 2-1/2 percent. |

Looking at the first paragraph in both statements, the July statement is both more definitive and confirms the trends observed in June. The biggest differences are in the second paragraph: while the Fed chose to maintain the federal funds target in June, they took a more dovish stance in July by lowering this target.

In addition, the June statement seems to express increased uncertainty (especially when it comes to outcomes) compared to July. Both statements conclude that the Fed will continue to monitor incoming information and act accordingly. Lastly, the July statement includes a paragraph on Open Market Operations that is in line with Fed’s decision to lower its target rate, although the decision comes earlier than expected.

1. **How do you interpret the tone of the July 2019 Statement?**

The July 2019 statement present a more explicit view on a possible downturn in the economy driven by global developments as outlined in the second paragraph.

1. **What do you think happened in the next meeting (September 2019)?**

|  |  |
| --- | --- |
| July 31, 2019  Information received since the Federal Open Market Committee met in June indicates that the labor market remains strong and that economic activity has been rising at a moderate rate. Job gains have been solid, on average, in recent months, and the unemployment rate has remained low. Although growth of household spending has picked up from earlier in the year, growth of business fixed investment has been soft. On a 12-month basis, overall inflation and inflation for items other than food and energy are running below 2 percent. Market-based measures of inflation compensation remain low; survey-based measures of longer-term inflation expectations are little changed.  Consistent with its statutory mandate, the Committee seeks to foster maximum employment and price stability. In light of the implications of global developments for the economic outlook as well as muted inflation pressures, the Committee decided to lower the target range for the federal funds rate to 2 to 2-1/4 percent. This action supports the Committee’s view that sustained expansion of economic activity, strong labor market conditions, and inflation near the Committee’s symmetric 2 percent objective are the most likely outcomes, but uncertainties about this outlook remain. As the Committee contemplates the future path of the target range for the federal funds rate, it will continue to monitor the implications of incoming information for the economic outlook and will act as appropriate to sustain the expansion, with a strong labor market and inflation near its symmetric 2 percent objective.  In determining the timing and size of future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the Committee will assess realized and expected economic conditions relative to its maximum employment objective and its symmetric 2 percent inflation objective. This assessment will take into account a wide range of information, including measures of labor market conditions, indicators of inflation pressures and inflation expectations, and readings on financial and international developments.  The Committee will conclude the reduction of its aggregate securities holdings in the System Open Market Account in August, two months earlier than previously indicated.  Voting for the monetary policy action were Jerome H. Powell, Chair; John C. Williams, Vice Chair; Michelle W. Bowman; Lael Brainard; James Bullard; Richard H. Clarida; Charles L. Evans; and Randal K. Quarles. Voting against the action were Esther L. George and Eric S. Rosengren, who preferred at this meeting to maintain the target range for the federal funds rate at 2-1/4 to 2-1/2 percent. | September 18, 2019  Information received since the Federal Open Market Committee met in July indicates that the labor market remains strong and that economic activity has been rising at a moderate rate. Job gains have been solid, on average, in recent months, and the unemployment rate has remained low. Although household spending has been rising at a strong pace, business fixed investment and exports have weakened. On a 12-month basis, overall inflation and inflation for items other than food and energy are running below 2 percent. Market-based measures of inflation compensation remain low; survey-based measures of longer-term inflation expectations are little changed.  Consistent with its statutory mandate, the Committee seeks to foster maximum employment and price stability. In light of the implications of global developments for the economic outlook as well as muted inflation pressures, the Committee decided to lower the target range for the federal funds rate to 1-3/4 to 2 percent. This action supports the Committee’s view that sustained expansion of economic activity, strong labor market conditions, and inflation near the Committee’s symmetric 2 percent objective are the most likely outcomes, but uncertainties about this outlook remain. As the Committee contemplates the future path of the target range for the federal funds rate, it will continue to monitor the implications of incoming information for the economic outlook and will act as appropriate to sustain the expansion, with a strong labor market and inflation near its symmetric 2 percent objective.  In determining the timing and size of future adjustments to the target range for the federal funds rate, the Committee will assess realized and expected economic conditions relative to its maximum employment objective and its symmetric 2 percent inflation objective. This assessment will take into account a wide range of information, including measures of labor market conditions, indicators of inflation pressures and inflation expectations, and readings on financial and international developments.  Voting for the monetary policy action were Jerome H. Powell, Chair, John C. Williams, Vice Chair; Michelle W. Bowman; Lael Brainard; Richard H. Clarida; Charles L. Evans; and Randal K. Quarles. Voting against the action were James Bullard, who preferred at this meeting to lower the target range for the federal funds rate to 1-1/2 to 1-3/4 percent; and Esther L. George and Eric S. Rosengren, who preferred to maintain the target range at 2 percent to 2-1/4 percent. |

In September, the Fed decided to further lower the target rate to 1.75%-2.00% (from 2.00%-2.25%), in line with its July guidance stating a possible downturn in the economy driven by global developments. This guidance and view is further supported in the September statement by comments highlighting that business fixed investment and exports have weakened.