

Sample Individual Oral Proposal (Literature-only)

Field of Inquiry: Beliefs, values and education
Global Issue: The link between money and happiness
Work 1: <i>The Merchant of Venice</i> by William Shakespeare
Work 2: <i>Border Town</i> by Shen Congwen

Proposal (200 – 300 words):

*I have chosen this global issue in order to explore how happiness is dependent on having – or not having – money. People often think that to have a happy life, one must have money or even be rich. Our capitalist societies encourage us to lead lives devoted to earning more and more money. However, in the works of literature I have studied, characters who have money and are even counted rich are not always the happiest characters. Take Antonio from *The Merchant of Venice*. He is a powerful trader, with a good reputation on *The Rialto* and enough money to invest in four trading ships. Although when Bassanio asks to lend him 3000 ducats he does not have the ready cash, his credit is good enough to borrow the money to give to his friend. However, despite his money Antonio is a melancholy character. His first lines in the play express this sadness and his friends are all trying to cheer him up. By contrast, Shen Congwen's novel *Border Town* is set in a poor corner of rural China against a backdrop of rural poverty. Yet many of the characters in the story are content with their lot in life. Congwen describes an idyllic world where even poor peasants derive all their happiness from their connection to nature. According to these literary works, it's not money that makes a person happy at all, and the pursuit of money eventually leads people into trouble and sadness.*