ABSTRACT

Shen Congwen (沈从文, 1902 - 1988) is a very famous and outstanding writer in contemporary China. He has written several books of essays and fiction which mainly centered on the life and people of his homeland, Xiang Xi (湘西).

This academic exercise attempts to make a thorough study of Shen Congwen's prose writings, especially Cong Wen Zi Zhuan (《从文自传》), Xian Xing San Ji (《湘行散记》) and Xiang Xi (《湘西》). Cong Wen Zi Zhuan tells of his youth and life experiences. As for Xiang Xing San Ji and Xiang Xi, he presents the customs, the life and people of his homeland.

Structurally, this academic exercise is divided into six chapters.

Chapter one is an introduction. It consists of a brief discussion of Shen Congwen's work and the objectives of studying his prose writings.

Chapter two is an account of Shen Congwen's life and his prominent status in China's literary world.

Chapter three is a discussion of the background and the intentions of the writer in writing Cong Wen Zi Zhuan, Xiang Xing San Ji and Xiang Xi.

Chapter four concerns the important themes of Shen Congwen's prose through an in-depth analysis.
Chapter five deals with the special aesthetic features in Shen Congwen's prose.

Chapter six concludes with an overall evaluation of Shen Congwen's prose.

Most of Shen Congwen's prose is derived from his heart, using natural language as the medium. His works have been complimented as exhibiting a genuine natural beauty and an inner quality of sensitivity and artistry, which make his prose writing unique in modern Chinese literature.