A prolific, creative writer, Shen Congwen (1902-1988) had published over 60 volumes of original pieces of work. His life experiences were varied as well as unique, having spent his first 20 years in his countryside hometown (known as Xiang-xi, or western Hunan Province) and his remaining years in the city until his demise.

His most impressive works were reflective of his stay in the countryside, although there were a large number of other good pieces of work derived from his city life experiences. Since the May Fourth Movement of 1919, there had been hundreds of pieces of literary works depicting city and rural life, however, Shen Congwen was the only writer who consistently contributed his entire writing career in both countryside and city experiences as his main theme.

Calling himself a "country man", he believed that his readers could best appreciate his values and outlook of life from studying both the rural and city themes, lacking either of these would lead to an incomplete understanding of his works. Thus, a comparative study of both his rural and city themes is not only significant but also necessary. Since a profound study in this field has yet to be established, this paper is my humble attempt. My approach will be focussed on the theme, content, thoughts and artistic features behind his works, so as to reveal the true spirit of his work as well as to give a fair assessment on Shen Congwen's achievements in Chinese Modern literature.

The first chapter gives a brief account of the objective and method of this dissertation. The second chapter explores the sources of his work on city and rural life-style. The third chapter deals with the amount of works he wrote on the themes of city and rural life. Chapter four gives a comparative study on the themes with respect to historical background, geographical environment and human affairs. The fifth chapter discusses his views regarding the outlook of life, the social structure and the moral values which reflected in his work. Chapter six deals with a comparative study of his artistic style, character portrayal and linguistic skill. Chapter seven gives a summary of the analysis in the previous six chapters as well as to confirm the excellent achievement and contribution Shen Congwen has made in this field.