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Sommario/riassunto	Focusing on a moment and a source in 19th-century France, Christopher Prendergast takes up a big question that is still with us: <i>What is a classic?</i> His enquiry, which centres on the French critic Sainte-Beuve (1804-69), who asked the question 'Qu'est-ce qu'un classique?' in an essay of 1850, takes us on a tour of the history of the 'classic' that provides insights into and beyond the 'culture wars' of the 19th century. - ;Focusing on a moment and a source in nineteenth-century France, Christopher Prendergast takes up a big question that is still with us: What is a classic? The question