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Sommario/riassunto

The forerunner of today's book clubs, nineteenth-century literary societies provided a lively social and intellectual forum where people could gather and discuss books, cultural affairs, and current events. In *Come bright Improvement!*, Heather Murray explores the literary societies of Ontario between 1820 and 1900 - some of which are still in existence today - and examines the extent to which they mirrored or challenged contemporary social, political, and intellectual trends. Based on a wealth of original research with periodicals and local archival materials, Murray traces the evolution from early political and debating clubs to more dedicated literary and cultural societies, such as Shakespeare or Browning groups. Many people formed literary societies, including workers, women, Black fugitives, and members of religious denominations such as Quakers and Methodists. Murray studies the societies in detail, exploring everything from the reading materials they favoured to the other kinds of social and civic activities in which they participated. Of additional interest to scholars of book history is the book's resource guide, which records the location, history, and archival deposits of several hundred societies. A first in the study of the book club phenomenon, *Come, bright Improvement!* is a wonderful introduction to nineteenth-century Ontario, the history of book studies, and the history of reading.

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