

# Charles Dickens Wouldn't Have Played Powerball

Lottery obsession is nothing new, Nina Martyris tells us in a story for [NPR](#). In fact, Charles Dickens was horrified by the lottery.

As recounted in Dickens' [Pictures from Italy](#), he was fascinated by the disturbing lottery practices he witnessed in Naples in 1845.

So popular was the local lottery of the time that Neapolitans would go to any lengths to obtain the lucky numbers. According to Martyris:

*“The lottery office in Naples had a large book called the Universal Lottery Diviner, ‘where every possible accident and circumstance is provided for, and has a number against it.’ For instance, when a fire broke out at the king’s palace, there was such a run on numbers allotted to ‘king,’ ‘palace’ and ‘fire’ that the authorities had to hurriedly shut them down.*

*Dickens heard of a man being thrown fatally from his horse, only to be pounced on by a punter – a person who places a wager – who begged him, ‘If you have one gasp of breath left, mention your age for Heaven’s sake, that I may play that number in the lottery.’ Even grislier was the sight of speculators at a public execution counting ‘the gouts of blood that spirt out, here or there’ in order to buy that number.”*

After witnessing a lottery drawing, Dickens felt pity for the disappointed fools he watched walk away. He penned a critique of the lottery, which he felt abused the hopes (and finances) of the poor:

*“They bring an immense revenue to the Government; and diffuse a taste for gambling among the poorest of the poor,’ he wrote, ‘which is very comfortable to the coffers of the State, and very ruinous to themselves.’”*

So, if you are inclined to take life advice from deceased novelists, you might want to stay out the Powerball fray from now on.

*Image: KGO-TV*