

Tracks 31 & 32

Our most important festival is without doubt Christmas. We all look forward to it for months, buying presents for our loved ones and decorating our homes. It's magical for everyone but for children especially. When we knew Father Christmas was about to visit, my sister Samantha and I were always too excited to sleep.

Tracks 33–36

See pages 82–83 for text.

Track 37**Sample answers:**

Candidate: I love Guy Fawkes Night. It's a British celebration held on 5th November every year. The origins of it are really fascinating, a story of intrigue and deception. In 1605, Guy Fawkes planted some gunpowder under the Houses of Parliament. He wanted to blow up the government and the King, but he was caught. He was tortured and executed for treason.

People lit bonfires to celebrate the fact that King James had survived, and the government made the day a national day of thanksgiving. People still light bonfires to this day, and for this reason, the festival is sometimes called Bonfire Night. A cloth 'Guy' is put on top of the bonfire and burned. People also set off fireworks in their back gardens or they attend public firework displays.

When I was younger, my dad would set off fireworks in our garden and I would be terrified. They were so loud they made me jump! But I had to try and hide it because he had gone to a lot of trouble to prepare and light the fireworks for us. Our cat hated Bonfire Night and would hide behind the sofa for hours on end!

I love this festival for many reasons. Firstly, it brings some colour and excitement to an otherwise very dark time of year. Then, I love the story behind it. It's so much more fascinating than the stories behind other festivals. Last but not least, I love the fact that it's a major celebration that is particular to the British. I don't think the British are too good at national celebrations, probably a result of our Puritan past. But the 5th of November is a valued exception.

It also amuses me that while the French celebrate Bastille Day, the anniversary of when revolutionaries stormed the Bastille Prison representing royal authority, we celebrate Guy Fawkes Night, the anniversary of when a plan to kill the King failed and the status quo was upheld. It says quite a lot about the differences between our cultures.

Examiner: Do you think everyone in Britain knows about the origins of the festival?

Candidate: Yes, I do. There's even a rhyme to help you remember: Remember, remember the 5th of November. Gunpowder, treason and plot. I see no reason why gunpowder treason should ever be forgot.

Track 38

This year, I'm spending New Year with my boyfriend's family. We're arriving on 28th December and staying till 4th January. I'm really looking forward to it.

Tracks 39–43

See pages 84–86 for text.