

Guy Fawkes Day

A Reading A-Z Level S Leveled Book
Word Count: 999

Connections

Writing and Art

Create a piece of art that represents the Guy Fawkes Day celebration.
Write a summary of your artwork.

Social Studies

Research to learn more about Parliament in the United Kingdom.
Create a poster showing the different parts and identify the role of each part.

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Guy Fawkes Day

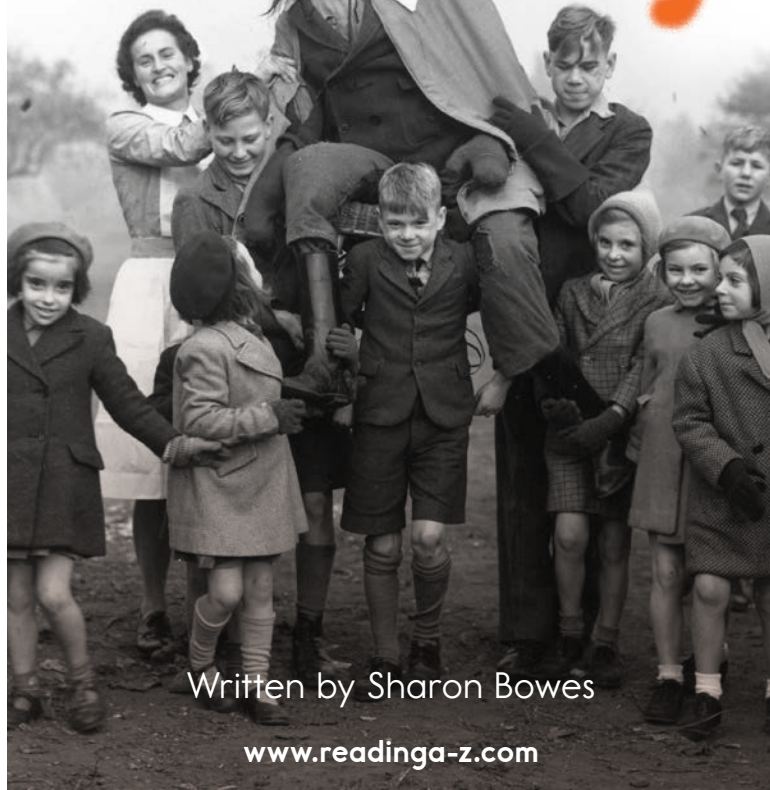


**Multi
level
S•V•Y**

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Focus Question

Who was Guy Fawkes? Why is Guy Fawkes Day celebrated in the United Kingdom?

Words to Know

bonfires	plot
dummy	rebellion
executed	revolt
loyal	treason
Parliament	

Front cover: Bonfire Night in Lewes, England

Title page: Children carry the Guy Fawkes dummy to the bonfire.

Page 3: Guy Fawkes masks

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Correlation

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What Is Bonfire Night?

“Remember, remember the fifth of November.

Gunpowder, **Treason**, and **Plot**,

We know no reason why Gunpowder Treason
Should ever be forgot.”

—Traditional nursery rhyme

On November 5 every year, people in the United Kingdom watch fireworks and attend **bonfires**. People cheer when a **dummy**, called a “Guy,” on top of the fire goes up in flames.

This is Guy Fawkes Day, or Bonfire Night. It celebrates a day in 1605 when the king of England and his government survived a plot to kill them.



The Lewes, England, Bonfire Night celebration is the biggest in the world.

Who Was Guy Fawkes?

Guy Fawkes was born in 1570 in England. Queen Elizabeth I was the ruler then. At that time in Europe, many Catholic and Protestant countries were at war. The Catholic religion was illegal in England in those days. Catholics who were caught practicing their religion were punished.



Guy Fawkes went by the nickname Guido.

Guy's grandparents were Catholic, but his parents were Protestant. Guy's father died, and his mother remarried a Catholic. At school, he made friends with people who were Catholic. When he was a teenager, Guy became a Catholic. He became angry about how badly Catholics were treated in England.

When Guy was old enough, he left England to join the Catholic Spanish army. He was a soldier for twelve years. He learned how to use gunpowder to make explosives.

The Gunpowder Plot

In 1603, Queen Elizabeth I died and King James I took her place. He was a Protestant king who passed tough laws against the Catholic religion.

Many English Catholics were still **loyal** to the king of England. However, Fawkes met other Englishmen in the Spanish army who were also angry about the king's treatment of Catholics.

In April 1604, Robert Catesby led a group of men in a plot to kill King James I. The plotters asked Fawkes to join them. They needed him to make the explosives. Fawkes agreed.



The Gunpowder Plotters, led by Robert Catesby, second from right

In May 1604, Fawkes met with Catesby and other plotters in London. They swore never to reveal their plan.

Their plot was to blow up the **Parliament** buildings. The king and all of his government would be there. The plotters would start a **rebellion** with Catholic supporters. They would kidnap King James's daughter, Princess Elizabeth, and make her queen. Elizabeth was only nine years old. They believed that Catholic rulers could control her decisions.



Princess Elizabeth

Robert Catesby lived in a house just across the river from Parliament. The plotters bought thirty-six barrels of gunpowder and stored them in his house.

One of the group, Thomas Percy, got a job as a royal bodyguard. He moved into a house near Parliament. He was also able to rent a cellar beneath the buildings of Parliament. The group used a rowboat to take the gunpowder across the river from Robert Catesby's house at night. They hid it in the cellar beneath Parliament.

Guy Fawkes pretended to be Thomas Percy's servant so he could easily enter the Parliament buildings. His job was to guard the gunpowder hidden in the basement.

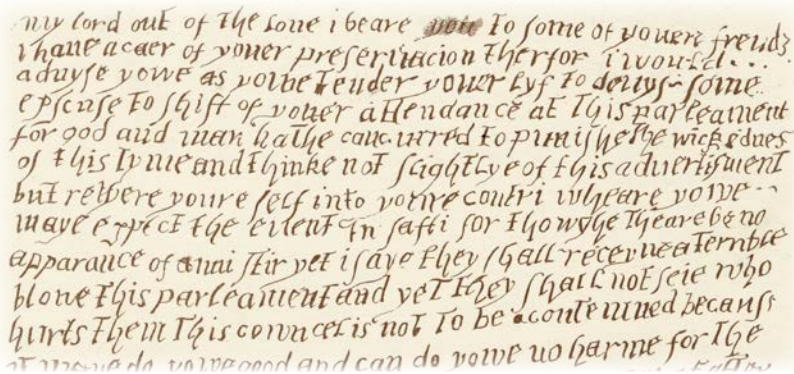
The opening of Parliament had been set for November 5, 1605. The plotters were ready.



Some think that Guy Fawkes's gunpowder was too old to cause an explosion.

Caught!

A secret letter was sent to a Catholic nobleman named Lord Monteagle. He was loyal to the king. The letter warned Monteagle not to attend Parliament on November 5 because something bad would happen. Monteagle showed the letter to the king's assistant. When the king heard this news, he ordered his men to search the Parliament buildings.



my lord out of the love i beare ~~unto~~ To some of your friends
I have a care of your preservation therfor I would
advise youe as youe tender your lyf To dooys some
excuse To shift of your attendance at this parliament
for good and man hath concurred To punish the wickednes
of this lyne and thinke not sightlye of this advertisement
but rather youe self into your countrey where youe
may expect the event In saftey for I knowe there be no
apparance of any stir yet if ave they shall receive a terrible
blowe this parliament and yet they shall not see who
hurteth them This counsell is not to be continued because
I knowe do youe good and can do youe no harme for I the

Part of the letter sent to Lord Monteagle

The search party found firewood in the dark cellar. They did another search. This time they found Fawkes and the fuses and matches he was carrying. They looked under the firewood and discovered the barrels of gunpowder.

Guy Fawkes was caught. He told the king's guards that he had wanted to blow up the king and his government. He was only sorry that the plot had failed. He insisted that no one else had helped him.

Fawkes was put in prison in the Tower of London. On November 9, he was forced to confess the names of the others in the group.

On the morning of November 5, the plotters had heard that Fawkes was in prison. They left London and tried to start a **revolt** against the government. On November 8, a group of the king's men caught up with them. Robert Catesby and three others were killed in a gunfight. The rebellion had failed.



The English courts sentenced each of the eight surviving plotters to death for being a traitor. In January 1606, Guy Fawkes and three others were **executed**. Their punishment was a warning to anyone who might try the same.



King James I later praised Guy Fawkes for his loyalty to his cause.

Another Conspiracy?

Some people believe that the king's own ministers might have helped the plotters. One of the king's ministers may have even written the warning letter. Perhaps the government knew the plotters had rented the basement and smuggled the gunpowder inside. Stopping the plot could have been a way to make Catholics look bad and create support for the unpopular king.

There is no proof of this version of the story. However, stopping the Gunpowder Plot did give the English people relief. Their king was safe.



King James I

Parliament officially made November 5 a day of celebration. The celebration was meant to strengthen the people's loyalty to the king.

The Legacy of the Plot

The holiday was first known as Gunpowder Treason Day. In the seventeenth century, people rang church bells and lit bonfires to mark the day.

In England then, people already burned dummies on bonfires. They believed that doing this would drive away evil spirits. On November 5, people began to burn a dummy of Guy Fawkes on the bonfire.



Modern artwork celebrates Guy Fawkes Day.

Bonfire Parties

Some parts of Britain have special traditions for Bonfire Night. In the town of Lewes (in the south of England), people wear costumes and carry torches through the streets. Some towns burn dummies of famous people who are unpopular with the public today, instead of Guy Fawkes.



In the nineteenth century, big firework displays and parades began. People marched to where the bonfire and firework displays were held. Now, the bonfires are put on by local organizations.

Conclusion

Guy Fawkes Day celebrates the failure of the Gunpowder Plot to kill the king of England. These events happened over four hundred years ago. Today, people around the United Kingdom look forward to bonfires and fireworks on November 5. Guy Fawkes Day has become a day to celebrate and have fun with friends and family.

Some Fiery Facts

Once a year, Parliament's guards search the houses of Parliament before the official opening. They make sure there are no plotters hiding in the basements. This is a traditional ceremony.

The 2,500 kilograms (5,512 lb.) of gunpowder hidden by Guy Fawkes would have exploded out about 490 meters (536 yd.).

Guy Fawkes has an island in the Galapagos Islands, Ecuador, named after him, called Isla Guy Fawkes.



The guards prepare for their annual search of Parliament.

Glossary

bonfires (<i>n.</i>)	large fires built outside for celebrations (p. 4)
dummy (<i>n.</i>)	a figure that is a likeness or model of someone (p. 4)
executed (<i>v.</i>)	killed, especially as punishment for committing a crime (p. 11)
loyal (<i>adj.</i>)	faithful to a person, government, institution, or cause (p. 6)
Parliament (<i>n.</i>)	the lawmaking body of the government of the United Kingdom, consisting of the House of Commons and the House of Lords (p. 7)
plot (<i>n.</i>)	a plan or scheme (p. 4)
rebellion (<i>n.</i>)	a fight against authority or power; an uprising (p. 7)
revolt (<i>n.</i>)	a fight against a government or authority (p. 10)
treason (<i>n.</i>)	a crime of betrayal or disloyalty against one's government or ruler (p. 4)