ENGLISH HISTORY

Guy Fawkes' Day



On the 5th November 1605 there was a failed attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament in London by a group of dissident Catholics. Now on the 5th November every year, people across the UK light bonfires, let off fireworks, and burn effigies of a man named Guy Fawkes.
The reason we do this is in 1603, Protestant James I became King of England. His predecessor Queen Elizabeth I had repressed Catholicism in England. Many Catholics hoped that James, being the son of the late Catholic Mary Queen of Scots, would be more sympathetic to their plight. He wasn't and continued to carry out persecutions against them.

It was during this time that a Catholic man named Robert Catesby began plotting the king's demise. Catesby wanted to kill the king and his parliament, spark an uprising and restore a Catholic monarch to the English throne. Together with his cousin Thomas Wintour, Catesby began recruiting other Catholics to his cause and had soon mapped out the first part of their plan to place multiple barrels of gunpowder under the House of Lords. By doing this they would blow up the king and his government on the opening day of parliament. To achieve this, they needed an explosives expert, Guy Fawkes.

They leased a vault underneath the House of Lords and under the cover of darkness brought in 36 barrels of gunpowder. On the night of November 4, Guy Fawkes was tasked with guarding the vault. During this time an anonymous letter was sent to Lord Monteagle, a Catholic loyal to the crown, with a warning to avoid the State Opening of Parliament stating. Although it has never been proven who sent the letter, many believe it was conspirator Francis Tresham, the brother-in-law of Lord Monteagle.

The letter had soon reached the king who ordered an extensive search of the Houses of Parliament. It was just after midnight when Fawkes and the stockpile of gunpowder were discovered.

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The king ordered Fawkes be tortured at the Tower of London, to reveal the names of his co-conspirators. A confession was eventually extracted from him but by this time the other conspirators had already been arrested, except for four, including Catesby, who died in a gunfight with English troops.

After a show trial in January 1606, Fawkes and his remaining co-conspirators were found guilty of treason and sentenced to death. They were all publicly hung, drawn and quartered, although Fawkes managed to avoid the latter part of his execution by leaping to his death as he awaited the gallows and subsequently died of a broken neck.

As news spread of the plot, Londoners began lighting bonfires in celebration of the fact James I was still alive and in 1606 the Observance of 5th November Act was passed, enforcing an annual public day of thanksgiving for the plot's failure. It became known as Gunpowder Treason Day.

1. **Vocabulary. Match these words with their synonyms from the text:**
   - **a)** dummies (passage 1)
   - **b)** situation, problem (passage 1)
   - **c)** revolution (passage 2)
   - **d)** explosive (passage 2)
   - **e)** rented (passage 3)
   - **f)** shooting (passage 5)
   - **g)** jumping (passage 6)
   - **h)** fiasco (passage 7)



2. **Are the following statements TRUE or FALSE? Copy the evidence from the text.**

a) James I understood Catholic people's feelings and helped them.

b) The night before the event nobody was watching the gunpowder.

c) The leader of the plot was not arrested and executed.

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