

Bonfire Night, also called Guy Fawkes Night, is celebrated on 5 November, and the night skies all over the UK are filled with colour. It's a tradition that started with a historic event.

Before reading

Do the preparation task first. Then read the article and do the exercises to check your understanding.

Preparation task

Match the definitions (a–h) with the vocabulary (1–8).

Vocabulary

1. a bonfire
2. a firework
3. a Catholic
4. a Protestant
5. to blow up
6. gunpowder
7. to light
8. a plot

Definition

- a. a rocket that explodes in the sky, making bright lights
- b. a person who follows the Christian religion of the Church of England
- c. to explode or make something explode
- d. a large fire in the open air
- e. a person who follows the Christian religion of the Pope
- f. a type of explosive material
- g. to set fire to something or make something burn
- h. a secret plan to do something that is harmful or against the law, especially to damage a government

Bonfire Night

'Remember, remember the fifth of November' is the first line of an old British poem. For over 400 years, on 5 November, people in Britain have had bonfires and fireworks to remember a historic event.

The history

In 1605, some English Catholics were angry because King James I was treating them badly. James I was a Protestant, and many Catholics wanted a Catholic country. In November of that year, a group of Catholic men made a plan to blow up the government buildings in London, the Houses of Parliament. An enormous explosion was planned for 5 November, when the king was going to open Parliament. The men put 36 barrels of gunpowder below the Houses of Parliament and waited for the king to arrive. The group decided that one of them, named Guy Fawkes, should light the gunpowder and cause the explosion.

Their plan didn't succeed. The police found the gunpowder before it exploded and they caught all the men involved in the plot. The men were tortured and killed. To celebrate his survival, King James ordered the people of England to have a bonfire on the night of 5 November.

Bonfires, guys and fireworks

These days, Bonfire Night is a fun tradition with a festive atmosphere, and people don't connect it to religion or politics. All over Britain there are firework displays and bonfires, with models of Guy Fawkes, which are burned on the fire. The guy is made of old clothes, and the clothes are filled with newspaper. The fireworks are a reminder of the gunpowder that Guy Fawkes hid in the Houses of Parliament. Some people have a small bonfire in their garden, while in main towns and cities there are big bonfires and firework displays.

Food

It's normally quite cold in November in Britain, so on Bonfire Night people wear hats, scarves and gloves to spend the evening outside. Traditional Bonfire Night food includes hot dogs, burgers and hot baked potatoes. The potatoes are cooked on the bonfire and filled with butter and cheese. There are also toffee apples, which are apples on a stick, covered in sweet toffee, and in the north of England there is a special type of cake called parkin. Toasting marshmallows on the bonfire is also popular.

Firework safety

Fireworks in the night sky are beautiful to watch. But fireworks are dangerous and they can hurt people and damage things, so you should always be careful around them. Never light fireworks inside or near other people or buildings, and never hold lit fireworks in your hands. Also, keep your pets inside because they can be scared by the loud bangs.

Tasks

Task 1

Are the sentences true or false?

	Answer	
1. Bonfire Night has been celebrated for more than 400 years.	True	False
2. Guy Fawkes and his group wanted to have a Protestant country.	True	False
3. They decided to blow up the Houses of Parliament on 5 November because the king was going to be there on that day.	True	False
4. Their plan worked.	True	False
5. King James ordered people to have a bonfire in celebration of his life.	True	False
6. Today, people burn models of King James on the bonfire.	True	False
7. People sometimes cook food on the bonfire.	True	False
8. Animals should stay at home on Bonfire Night.	True	False

Task 2

Complete the sentences with words from the box.

blow up	keep	watch	bake
celebrate	have	toast	light

1. People Bonfire Night on the evening of 5 November.
2. Guy Fawkes and his group tried to the Houses of Parliament.
3. Today people fireworks and them explode in the sky.
4. People also bonfires and burn models of Guy Fawkes on them.
5. Some people potatoes and marshmallows on the fire.
6. It's best to pets inside on Bonfire Night.

Discussion

Which special days do you celebrate in your country with fireworks or bonfires?

Answers

Preparation task

1. d
2. a
3. e
4. b
5. c
6. f
7. g
8. h

Task 1

1. True
2. False
3. True
4. False
5. True
6. False
7. True
8. True

Task 2

1. celebrate
2. blow up
3. light, watch
4. have
5. bake, toast
6. keep