

The Gunpowder Plot

WORKSHEET A

Exercise 1

Read the newspaper extract below. What did the man in the story want to do?

The London Times 5th November 1605

HOUSE OF COMMONS HORROR

Last night, a shock discovery was made under the Houses of Parliament just hours before our king, James I, opened Parliament.

A man calling himself John Johnson was found in a small room in the cellar filled with barrels of gunpowder and fuses. Palace sources have revealed that he was one of a number of conspirators who planned to blow up the Houses of Parliament, killing the king and his government.

Thirty-five-year-old Johnson, address unknown, is known to be a Catholic who wishes to 'end the line of Protestant kings and return the country to its Catholic faith'.

He also claims to have been framed, and denies being the person responsible for organising this outrageous 'Gunpowder Plot'. But one thing is sure: this country will never forget the name of John Johnson!



Exercise 2

Look at the questions and then find the answers on Worksheet B.

1. What was John Johnson's *real* name?
2. Where was he from?
3. How many barrels of gunpowder were there?
4. Who was the organiser of the plot?
5. Who wrote to his relative and mentioned the plot?
6. How many conspirators were there?
7. Were they captured or did they escape?
8. What happened to them?
9. What happens in Britain every year on 5th November?
10. Nowadays, what is a 'guy'?

The Gunpowder Plot

WORKSHEET B

The Gunpowder Plot was a conspiracy to kill King James I, as well as the members of the House of Lords and Commons at the re-opening of Parliament. It was devised by a group of Catholics in protest against the anti-Catholic laws that were being introduced by the king.

Robert Catesby was the leader of the group. It was he and his cousin, Thomas Wintour, and two other friends, Thomas Percy and John Wright, who formed the core. They were joined by nine more men; among them was Guy Fawkes (or 'Guido' as he preferred to be called), from the city of York in the north of England.

Fawkes found a cellar directly under the House of Lords and rented it out under the false name of John Johnson. The conspirators stored thirty-six barrels of gunpowder there, and Fawkes, who was an explosives expert, was to light the fuses on 5th November 1605.

The plot failed because one of the conspirators, Francis Tresham, sent a letter to his relative, who was a member of the House of Lords. The letter warned him not to attend the opening ceremony of Parliament. The letter was passed on to the authorities, who took action.

Guy Fawkes was found in the vault on the night of 4th November with the thirty-six barrels and a number of fuses. He was imprisoned and tortured, eventually revealing the names of the conspirators.

Soldiers of the king surrounded Holbeach House, in the Midlands, where they knew the plotters to be hiding. In the fight that followed, four of them were shot dead, including Catesby and Percy, who were actually killed by the same bullet. The others were imprisoned and hanged along with Guy Fawkes on 31st January 1606.

These days, on 5th November, children all over Britain celebrate Guy Fawkes Night by building huge bonfires and lighting fireworks. It's a family tradition and an occasion to eat potatoes baked by the flames. There is always a 'guy' on top of the fire; a guy is an *effigy* (model) of Guy Fawkes, dressed in the clothes of the 17th century.