



Why do we have Bonfire Night?

For Preview Only





Catholics Treated Badly

After Queen Elizabeth I died in 1603, James I became king. Catholics hoped that James I would treat them better than Elizabeth did.



Unfortunately, James did not turn out to be any more friendly towards Catholics than Elizabeth. Thirteen young men decided that violent action was the answer. These men were called the conspirators.

A small group formed under the leadership of Robert Catesby. Catesby felt that violence would be OK. He planned to blow up the Houses of Parliament.



In doing so, they would kill the King, maybe even the Prince of Wales, and the Members of Parliament who were making life difficult for the Catholics.

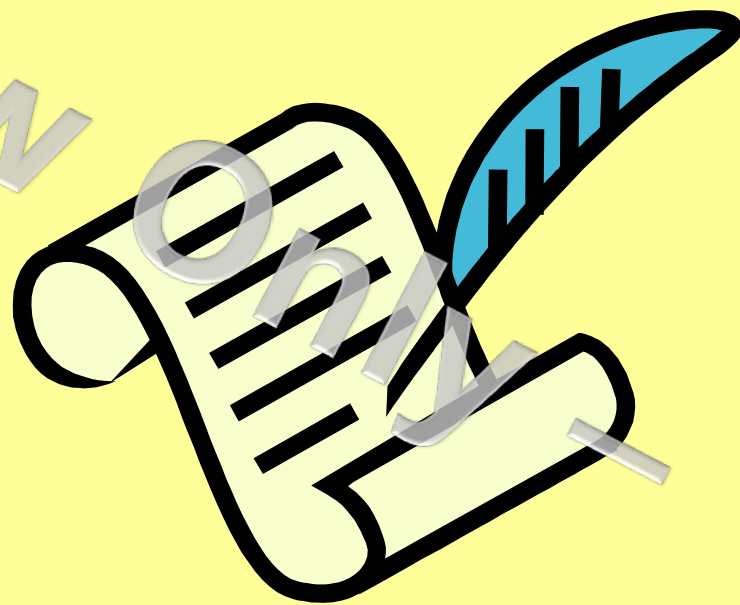


To carry out their plan, the conspirators got hold of 36 barrels of gunpowder - and stored them in a cellar, just under the House of Lords.



But as the group worked on the plot, it became clear that innocent people would be hurt or killed in the attack. Some of the plotters started having second thoughts.

One of the group members even sent an anonymous letter warning his friend, Lord Monteaagle, to stay away from the Parliament on November 5th.





The warning letter reached the King, and the King's forces made plans to stop the conspirators.

On 5th November the authorities stormed the cellar of Parliament. Guy Fawkes was caught red handed with 36 barrels of gunpowder. He arrested, tortured and executed.



No-one knows if Guy Fawkes would have been successful with his plan to blow up Parliament if he had not been betrayed.

Some have suggested that the gunpowder was so old it would not have worked. Since Guy Fawkes and the other conspirators got caught before trying to ignite the powder, we'll never know for certain.

Bonfires

On the very night that the Gunpowder Plot was foiled, on November 5th 1605,

bonfires were set alight to celebrate the safety of the King. Since then, November 5th has become known as Bonfire Night. The event is commemorated every year with fireworks and burning effigies of Guy Fawkes on a bonfire.

