

Comparing texts – Gunpowder plot

Text 1: Britain's first terrorists



This document one of a set of 4 PDF files that form the **Comparing texts – gunpowder plot** Level 2 Functional English reading resource contributed by Sarah Holmes. Visit the download page for this resource on www.skillsworkshop.org to find the remaining PDF files.

Britain's first terrorists

An article from the Sun newspaper

PDF Text 1 (this document)

<https://www.thesun.co.uk/news/4671842/gunpowder-plot-1605-robert-catesby-guy-fawkes-houses-parliament/>

Gunpowder Plot

A Wikipedia item

PDF Text 2

https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gunpowder_Plot

What was the Gunpowder Plot?

PDF Text 3

Pages from Guy Fawkes and the Gunpowder Plot (Why do we remember), primary school history series. First published in Great Britain in 2016 by The Watts Publishing Group. Produced for Franklin Watts by White-Thompson Publishing Ltd www.wtpub.co.uk

Working with multiple texts

PDF 4

L2 Functional English question paper – 10 questions based on Texts 1-3. Questions cover:

- form, purpose & audience
- comparing content
- tone & register
- positive bias
- facts & opinions
- layout features

What was the gunpowder plot of 1605 and why did Guy Fawkes and Robert Catesby try to blow up the Houses of Parliament?

The small group of radical Catholic plotters threatened to spark a religious war in Britain and change the course of history.

By Richard Cust and David Hughes 5th November 2017, 2:18 pm.

In November 1605, Britain's first terrorists hatched a plan to blow up King James I, the Prince of Wales and the Houses of Parliament in what became known as The Gunpowder Plot.



Led by charismatic religious fanatic Robert Catesby, and featuring radicalised ex-soldier Guido (or Guy) Fawkes, this small group of Catholic plotters threatened to change the course of history.

Guido (Guy) Fawkes and Robert Catesby were part of a small group of plotters.

Why did the Gunpowder Plotters try to blow up the Houses of Parliament?

The Gunpowder Plot grew out of decades of religious war and persecution dating back to Henry VIII's reign in the early sixteenth century. Since then, hundreds of Protestant martyrs had been burned at the stake in England under 'Bloody Mary', while hundreds of Catholics were executed for treason under Queen Elizabeth I.

When James I had succeeded Elizabeth in 1603 he was determined to put a stop to this religious conflict by allowing greater toleration for Catholics. However, he backtracked, and within a year many Catholics had become thoroughly disappointed and disillusioned.



Guy Fawkes was arrested after a second search of a cellar beneath parliament.

This was when Catesby, the charismatic leader of the plotters, persuaded his friends that God had decreed that King James and his supporters must be punished – in the most extreme fashion.

What happened in the Gunpowder Plot?

The plot was a long time in the making.

Guy Fawkes, the ex-soldier, was recruited to take charge in the spring of 1604 and in the summer the plotters began to dig a mine under the parliament house.

In early 1605 the plotters managed to lease a coal cellar underneath the House of Lords and began moving in the gunpowder. They packed 36 barrels of the explosive into the chamber beneath the House of Lords.

In such a confined space, the violent blast would have obliterated the parliament building, sending chunks of masonry raining down over a wide area and creating a fire storm that would have burst through the surrounding wooden buildings.

As well as its primary targets, it would have killed hundreds, if not thousands, of Londoners – the most devastating act of terrorism in Britain's history, plunging the nation into a religious war.



Then on the 26th October, just over a week before the opening of parliament on 5th November, one of the conspirators cracked. We still do not know which one – but the finger has always pointed at Francis Tresham, who had serious misgivings about the idea of blowing up Catholics as well as Protestants among the Lords.

Whoever it was warned Catholic Lord Monteagle, and there was a search of the parliament buildings on the morning of 4th November.

Incredibly, they actually found Fawkes in the cellar – but they believed his story that the large pile of brushwood and faggots concealing the gunpowder barrels were simply supplies for winter.

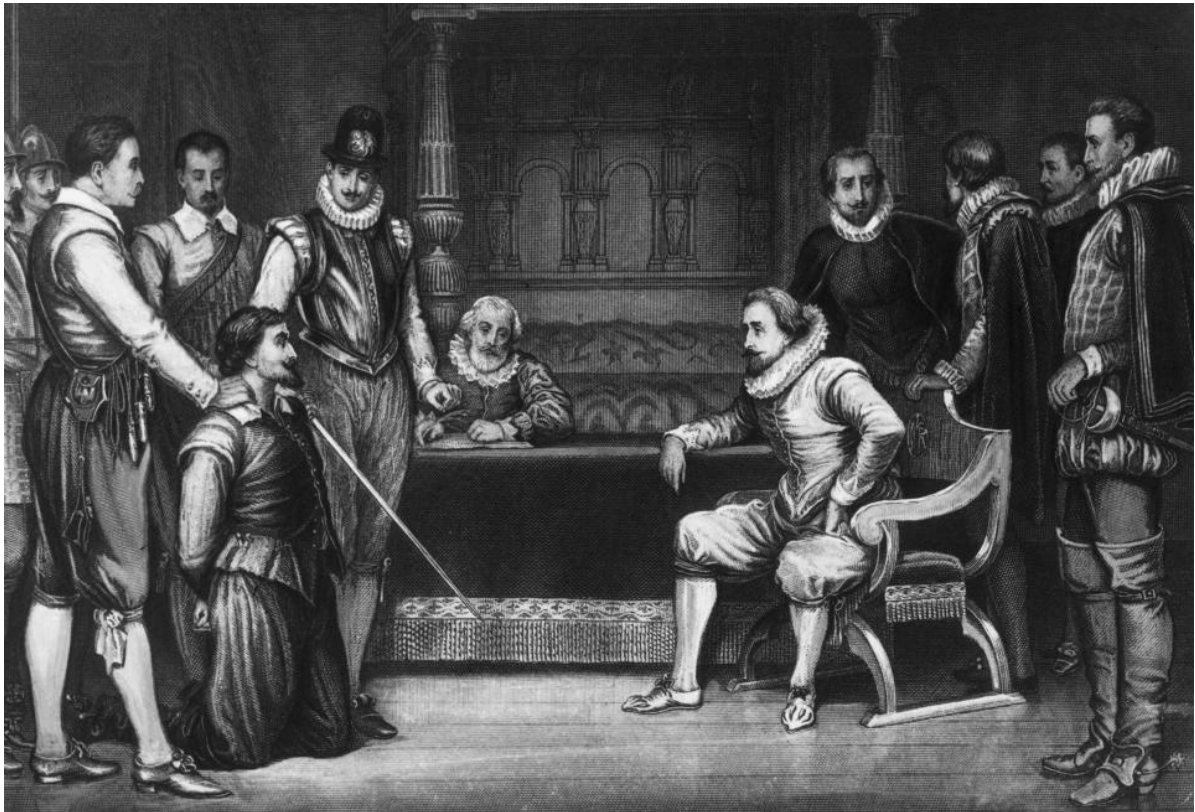
Word was sent back to King James, who was obsessed with the idea of being blown up after his own father had died that way in Scotland in 1567. He ordered another search at midnight on the 4th and they again they found Fawkes in the coal cellar, this time with his match at the ready – the plot was foiled.

How were the plotters punished?

Fawkes was arrested and tortured, while Catesby and the other plotters fled into the Midlands.

They were finally cornered by the local sheriff and militia at Holbeach House in Staffordshire, and in a bloody shoot-out, all were killed except Catesby's closest friend Tom Winter. He was brought back to London, tried with Fawkes and others involved, including an elderly Catholic priest, Father Garnet.

They all faced the grisly fate of traitors and were hung, drawn and quartered in front of baying crowds. This meant being hanged until nearly dead, cut open to have their still beating heart and vital organs ripped out, and then sliced up into four portions to be publicly displayed.



Fawkes was tortured before being hung, drawn and quartered.

Why do we celebrate Bonfire Night?

After the plot was crushed, relieved Londoners celebrated their deliverance with bonfires throughout the capital.

Early the following year, parliament passed an act decreeing that November 5 should be an annual day of thanksgiving.

Later in the seventeenth century Englishmen began marking the date by burning effigies of the pope on bonfires, before the tradition of burning 'the guy', after Guy Fawkes, was established in the eighteenth century.