

Weekender

Guy Fawkes



BBC WORLD SERVICE LEARNING ENGLISH



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BBC Learning English – Guy Fawkes

About this script

Please note that this is not a word for word transcript of the programme as broadcast. In the recording and editing process changes may have been made which may not be reflected here.

Yvonne: Hello, I'm Yvonne Archer, and this is Weekender. In today's programme, we find out why every year on the 5th of November, people across the UK enjoy fireworks and bonfire parties. This year is rather special as it's the 400th anniversary of this interesting event.

On the 5th of November 1605, a man named Guy Fawkes and 13 of his friends attempted to blow up the Houses of Parliament along with King James I and the entire government of England. But not many people actually know why Guy Fawkes tried to do this or the reason why we have parties on the anniversary of his attempt. Jo Reffin is an exception!

Joanne Reffin

In 1605, Guy Fawkes tried to blow up the Houses of Parliament because he wanted to kill the King because he wasn't happy with the way he was treating Catholics at that time. But Guy Fawkes was caught and executed and ever since then, we've had Guy Fawkes' Night where people have burnt dummies of Guy Fawkes on bonfires and had fireworks.

Yvonne: As we heard, at the time of Guy Fawkes' attempt, Catholic people in England were unfairly treated – they were discriminated against. For example, Catholics were not allowed an education and were even forced to worship secretly. But some people wanted England to return to the Catholic faith and Guy Fawkes and his group thought that they could help make that happen. So they smuggled 36 barrels of gunpowder into the cellars – the basement - of the Houses of Parliament, and waited for the King to arrive. But the guards found out about

the plot – the secret plan – and about the barrels of gunpowder... that’s an explosive powder that’s used to make bombs and fireworks. So, the guards burst in, arrested the men, and they were tortured as a result. And as Jo went on to explain, Guy Fawkes and his men were executed – they were put to death.

Tolling church bells

Of course, many Catholics made it clear that they were horrified at what Guy Fawkes had tried to do, but England continued to discriminate against them. In fact, it would take another 200 years before English Catholics would get the vote.

In 1706, the first year following Guy Fawkes’ failed Gunpowder Plot, a dummy of the Pope was burned on the bonfire. But since then, a Guy Fawkes dummy – a model or effigy of Guy Fawkes has been burned, even though Guy Fawkes was not actually put to death in that way.

Crackling bonfire

So why have we continued to celebrate such a bloody and violent memory over the last 400 years with bonfires and fireworks? And what happens at a typical Guy Fawkes’ party? I put those questions to Tim and Sean here in the BBC Learning English Office. As we hear what they had to say, listen out for the following language: ‘bangers’ – a type of fireworks, and “toffee apples” – something rather delicious to eat!

Tim, Sean

I think it’s just an excuse for the British these days to have fireworks on November the 5th. Modern fireworks are quite spectacular, they’re quite exciting so it’s quite a nice thing. The

Chinese have Chinese New Year - they have bangers, which is really exciting. We don't really have another event. But I think it's a bit of a shame that lots of people go to bonfire parties, but don't really know why...

SFX banger and loud fireworks

...Lots of nice things to eat, lots of things like treacle toffee and toffee apples and parkin – which is a gingerbread type thing. But the historical basis for it is to do with the attempted blowing up of the Houses of Parliament by Guy Fawkes.

Crackling bonfire

I mean what are we celebrating? Maybe we're celebrating the fact that he was found, stopped - and we burn a guy - an effigy of Guy Fawkes.

Yvonne: Guy Fawkes Night is also a good time to eat things like toffee apples. They're delicious, crisp apples which have been dipped in hot, sweet toffee. But be warned: once the toffee has cooled down, you'll need to be careful with your teeth because the toffee apples get quite hard!

Most people around the BBC Learning English office will be going to a fireworks party this weekend, especially as it's the 400th anniversary since Guy Fawkes' failed attempt to blow up the Houses of Parliament. As we heard, the 5th of November is usually the only date during the year when the British have a reason to use colourful, exciting fireworks – including bangers – which are really noisy.

But there are people who are very much in favour of a blanket ban. Let's find out why from Elena...

Elena safety

I really hate the fact that people can buy fireworks in shops instead of just going to an organised display and this is because the fireworks will be going off from, well I'd say, the end of October until well after the New Year. And speaking as a pet owner, it's just distressing for the pets and it's a bit distressing for me as well really.

Yvonne: Yes, it is rather unfortunate that fireworks distress and frighten our pet animals, and the advice is to keep them inside the house on November 5th. So, the party will go on – at least Jo's will!

Joanne Reffin 2

Having a bonfire party reminds me of when I was a child and all the family used to get together and watch fireworks and eat jacket potatoes and wave sparklers. And it's kind of a very happy community kind of time, so it's nice to have a party and have your friends with you when you do it.

Firework

Yvonne: As we've heard, Guy Fawkes' night can be a good opportunity to get family and friends together and have a few delicious, hot jacket potatoes to help keep us warm on a cold 5th of November evening. Jacket potatoes are baked in their skins once they've been washed and are great with a little salted butter.

OK, here's a quick recap of some of the language we've heard in today's BBC Learning English Weekender about Guy Fawkes the famous Gunpowder Plot:

to be discriminated against
plot

bonfire
effigy
fireworks
bangers
sparklers
toffee apples
jacket potatoes

And that's all for now. Goodbye.