

IES “A NOSA SEÑORA DOS OLLOS GRANDES”
Department of English

JCGL

Guy Fawkes

Remember, remember the fifth of November



Guy Fawkes (13 April 1570 – 31 January 1606) belonged to a group of Roman Catholic restorationists from England who planned the Gunpowder Plot of 1605. Their aim was to displace Protestant rule by blowing up the Houses of Parliament while King James I and the entire Protestant, and even most of the Catholic, aristocracy were inside. The conspirators saw this as a necessary reaction to the systematic discrimination against English Catholics.

The Gunpowder Plot was led by Robert Catesby, but Fawkes was put in charge of its execution. He was arrested a few hours before the planned explosion, during a search of the cellars underneath Parliament in the early hours of 5 November prompted by the receipt of an anonymous warning letter.

Bonfire Night, held on 5 November in the United Kingdom and some parts of the Commonwealth, is a commemoration of the plot, during which an effigy of Fawkes is often burned. The word "guy", meaning "man" or "person", is derived from his name.

In 18th-century England, it became a tradition for children to display a grotesque effigy of Fawkes, termed a "guy", as part of the Bonfire Night celebration. As part of the tradition, they would often stand on streetcorners begging for "a penny for the guy." The "guy" would be burned on a bonfire at the end of the evening. As a consequence, "guy" came to mean a man of odd appearance. Subsequently, in American English, "guy" lost any pejorative connotation, becoming a simple reference for any man or even woman.