C1-C2 ENGLISH LISTENING WORKSHEET

Guy Fawkes and Bonfire Night: The Scottish Connection

5 November 2026

Video: Bruce Fummey - Scottish history and Guy Fawkes (approx. 4:50)

Could Bonfire Night have Scottish origins? A lively account of James VI, the disputed Gowrie incident of 1600, the Gunpowder Plot of 1605, and the traditions surrounding 5 November - told with rapid Scottish speech and dry humour.

Before your lesson: Watch once without subtitles, then listen again. Write brief notes in the spaces provided. Focus on the chronology, implications and Scottish expressions.

Watch Bruce Fummey on YouTube

Listening Comprehension

Answer in your own words. Some questions require you to connect events, interpret humour or distinguish claims from established facts.

No.	Listening question and answer space
1	What two events does Bruce link to his claim that Bonfire Night has Scottish origins? Which came first?
2	According to the presenter, how was James drawn to Gowrie House, and what did he order after escaping?
3	Why did English Catholics initially have high hopes when James inherited the English throne, and what complicated those hopes?
4	How does Bruce distinguish Guy Fawkes from the plot's real organisers, and whom did the conspirators intend to kill?
5	Identify two practical preparations for the 1605 attack. Why did the opening of Parliament matter to the plan?
6	How did an attempt to protect someone expose the conspiracy? What was discovered beneath the House of Lords?
7	What does Bruce imply with the remarks about a "grass" and the "rack", and what ultimately happened to Fawkes?
8	How does Bruce contrast the annual commemorations ordered after the two incidents? Name two features of the later one.
9	How did the celebration change from its religious beginnings, and what irony does Bruce find in modern Bonfire Night?
10	How did children traditionally raise money for fireworks, and how does Bruce mock adults' confidence in handling them?

Phrase Match

Match each exact expression heard in the video (1-10) to its contextual meaning (A-J).

Expressions (1-10)	Meanings (A-J)
1. blow up	A. Saying less about a dispute may help it pass.
2. lured with	B. Informers are disliked by those they betray.
3. set off fireworks	C. This attempt finally became established and lasted.
4. Least said soonest mended	D. Enticed by an attractive story or offer.
5. went for a drastic option	E. On a device used to stretch and torture prisoners.
6. mastermind behind	F. Chose an extreme course of action.
7. nobody likes a grass	G. Originally existed in a particular form.
8. on the rack	H. Destroy something with explosives.
9. This time it stuck	I. The person who planned and organised a scheme.
10. started off as	J. Cause fireworks to explode by lighting them.

Synonym Match

Match each exact word heard in the video (1-10) to the closest contextual synonym (A-J).

Words (1-10)	Synonyms (A-J)
1. mysterious	A. unattributed
2. surrounded	B. yearly
3. annual	C. oppression
4. figurative	D. plotters
5. persecution	E. likeness
6. restrictions	F. enigmatic
7. conspirators	G. ordered
8. anonymous	H. limitations
9. decreed	I. encircled
10. effigy	J. metaphorical

Use the New Language

Write five original sentences, each using one word or expression from the matching exercises.

No.	Your sentence
1	
2	
3	
4	
5	

Discussion Questions

Use the report as a starting point. Discuss different interpretations, support your opinions and challenge assumptions.

Student A - Personal experience	Student B - Opinions and analysis
1. Have you ever attended Bonfire Night or a similar firework festival? What made it memorable?	1. Should a festival celebrating the failure of a violent political plot be reconsidered today?
2. Which tradition from your childhood is still celebrated in your family or community?	2. Does a festival's religious or political origin still matter if most people celebrate it differently?
3. Have you ever found a Scottish or other regional accent difficult to follow? What helped?	3. How responsibly should a popular storyteller handle disputed historical events such as the Gowrie incident?
4. Have you visited a historic site whose story turned out to be more complicated than you expected?	4. Can national identity be strengthened by shared legends, even when the historical evidence is uncertain?
5. Do you enjoy fireworks, or do you find the noise and crowds off-putting?	5. Should public fireworks be restricted because of environmental, safety or animal-welfare concerns?
6. Have you ever discovered that a familiar story was exaggerated or only partly true?	6. When traditions become tourist attractions, do they gain new life or lose their original meaning?
7. What traditional celebration from another country would you most like to experience?	7. Does humour make controversial history more accessible, or can it trivialise persecution and torture?
8. Which detail or joke in this video surprised you most, and why?	8. Should schools challenge the familiar version of national history, even when that makes it less entertaining?

60-Second Argument Challenge

Defend or challenge this claim: **"The meaning of a tradition matters less than the way people celebrate it today."** Use two facts from the video, acknowledge a counterargument, and include at least two exact expressions from Phrase Match.

Access the Video Transcript

Bruce speaks quickly in a strong Scottish accent, using colloquialisms, sarcasm and regional pronunciation. After completing the worksheet, use YouTube captions or "Show transcript" to check difficult passages. Automatic captions may contain errors.

Watch the report and open its YouTube transcript

Answer Key

Listening Comprehension

1. [0:00-0:35] He refers to the alleged 1600 plot against James VI in Scotland and the 1605 Gunpowder Plot in England, also targeting James. The Scottish incident came first.

2. [0:41-1:14] James was "lured with the story" of a mysterious prisoner and a pot of gold. Bruce says James survived and ordered an annual thanksgiving for his escape, which was later forgotten.

3. [1:17-2:12] James was the son of the Catholic Mary, Queen of Scots, so English Catholics hoped for an end to persecution, fines, restrictions and hiding in priest holes. But he was also Scotland's first Protestant king.

4. [2:10-2:27] Fawkes was not the "mastermind behind" the scheme; Bruce jokingly calls him the "explosives department". The plan was to kill James and his political establishment at Parliament's opening.

5. [2:24-2:51] They rented space underneath the House of Lords and stored thirty-six barrels of gunpowder. The opening would bring the king and the political establishment together.

6. [2:51-3:24] Bruce says one of the conspirators sent an anonymous warning to his pal, telling him to avoid Parliament on 5 November. Officials found a man calling himself "John Johnson", thirty-six barrels of gunpowder and firewood.

7. [3:25-3:44] A "grass" is an informer, while the "rack" refers to torture. Bruce jokes about the pressure to betray associates. Fawkes was arrested, tortured, gave up his fellow plotters and was executed.

8. [1:06-1:14; 3:44-4:08] The thanksgiving after the Scottish incident was forgotten, but the later commemoration "stuck". People rang church bells, lit bonfires and burned an effigy of Fawkes.

9. [4:02-4:18] It "started off as" a Protestant celebration but became a popular fireworks custom. Bruce jokes that people celebrate a king not being blown up by "blowing stuff up".

10. [4:16-4:35] Children made an effigy from old clothes and requested "a penny for the Guy" to buy fireworks. Bruce jokes about fathers claiming to know what they are doing, then quickly showing otherwise.

Phrase Match: 1=H, 2=D, 3=J, 4=A, 5=F, 6=I, 7=B, 8=E, 9=C, 10=G

Synonym Match: 1=F, 2=I, 3=B, 4=J, 5=C, 6=H, 7=D, 8=A, 9=G, 10=E

Example Sentences With the Phrases

No.	Example sentence
1	The demolition team had to blow up the unsafe chimney under controlled conditions.
2	The visitor was lured with promises of rare historical artefacts.
3	The council decided not to set off fireworks near the hospital.
4	When an old quarrel came up, my grandfather said, "Least said soonest mended".
5	After negotiations failed, the organisers went for a drastic option and cancelled the event.
6	The historian identified the mastermind behind the elaborate hoax.
7	In the play, a character complains that nobody likes a grass when a friend informs the police.
8	The prisoner was threatened with torture on the rack.
9	The organisers relaunched the festival with community support. This time it stuck.
10	The modern parade started off as a modest neighbourhood gathering.

Teacher note: Accept accurate paraphrases supported by the video. Times are approximate. The Gowrie episode and the claim of Scottish origins are presented as the speaker's interpretation; the historical circumstances remain disputed. Student discussions and original sentences are open-ended.