The Spark of History: Bonfire Night

Learning objective: To develop reading comprehension skills by retrieving information, making inferences, and evaluating historical context within a non-fiction text.

Read the passage carefully, then answer the questions provided. Ensure your answers are written in full sentences where required, using evidence from the text to support your points.

Every year, as the November nights grow frost-bitten and dark, the British sky erupts into a kaleidoscope of brilliant color. Known as Bonfire Night, this tradition marks the failed Gunpowder Plot of 1605. During this tumultuous period in history, a group of conspirators sought to undermine the parliamentary system by attempting to destroy the House of Lords. When the plot was discovered, the nation celebrated the safety of the monarch with great bonfires. Today, the event is a sensory spectacle of whistling rockets and crackling embers. However, it serves as more than just an evening of entertainment; it is a long-standing historical commemoration. While we enjoy the warmth of the fire and the communal atmosphere, we are also reflecting on a pivotal moment in the seventeenth century. As Max the monkey often says, every date on the calendar has a story behind it. Whether you are enjoying a toffee apple or marvelling at a Catherine wheel, remember that these festivities are deeply rooted in the vigilance of the past, marking a moment where the course of history was dramatically altered by a single discovery.

Word bank: commemoration · treason · parliamentary · spectacle · vigilance · tradition

1. Identify two specific reasons mentioned in the text why Bonfire Night is celebrated. (2 marks)

2. According to the text, what happened to the conspirators' plan to destroy the House of Lords? (2 marks)

3. What does the author mean by the phrase 'the British sky erupts into a kaleidoscope of brilliant color'? (2 marks)

4. Explain why the author suggests that Bonfire Night is 'more than just an evening of entertainment'. (2 marks)

5. Do you think it is important to continue celebrating historical events like the Gunpowder Plot? Justify your answer. (3 marks)

Draw: Illustrate a scene of a historical bonfire, incorporating elements of the night sky filled with fireworks, while including a small hidden detail that represents the 1605 era, such as an old-fashioned lantern or a scroll.

Extension challenge: Compare and contrast the way people might have celebrated this event in the 1600s versus how we celebrate it today. What might happen if the plot had been successful? Write a short, persuasive paragraph arguing whether the original name, 'Guy Fawkes Night', should be changed to reflect a broader historical perspective.