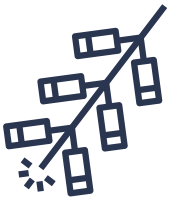


THE HISTORY OF FIREWORKS



Fireworks were invented in China in the 7th century. Legend has it that a group of Chinese monks were trying to create a medicine that would give people immortality. Instead, they accidentally invented gunpowder, which is the explosive used in fireworks.

Gunpowder was eventually used for guns and bombs, but since its invention it has always been used for fireworks, too. The Chinese would use the gunpowder as signal flares and for celebrations.

Over time, people learned that if certain metals were mixed with the gunpowder, brilliant colors could be made when it was ignited. Many more advancements took place that allowed fireworks to create all sorts of shapes and sounds, but they still work in the same way today.

For a long time, fireworks have been a big part of Fourth of July celebrations in the United States. This is partly because they symbolize the rockets and explosions that Francis Scott Key wrote about in his song "The Star Spangled Banner."



QUESTIONS

1. Gunpowder is mostly made out of sulphur and charcoal. If the story about the monks is true, why do you think they chose to experiment with those chemicals?

2. Why do you think fireworks are so popular for celebrations all over the world?

3. What special importance do fireworks have in Fourth of July celebrations in the U.S.? What do they symbolize?
