Delacroix: “Liberty Leading the People” (la libertà che guida il popolo)

1830, Oil on calvas, Paris, Louvre Museum
• Delacroix is one of the leading exponent of **Romanticism** and he worked 30 years for this painting “*Liberty Leading the People*”.

• He showed it at the 1831 Salon as a commemoration of what happened in the previous year: the people of Paris rebelled against the reign of Charles X who imposed an intolerable **totalitarian government**. This episode will be remembered as “Three Glorious Days”.

Delacroix re-creates in this painting a pyramidal structure:

- **The base** is composed by some bodies on the ground, which are painted with extreme realism. Here there is the realisation of death, that Delacroix had avoided in his previous paintings. The skin of the bodies is green because they remained lifeless for some time.

- **The top** of the pyramid is represented by a woman, the allegory of Liberty. The woman is bigger than the other people and proud raise the French flag and a rifle.
The *blue, white and red* of the *tricolour* reappear strategically in other parts of the painting:

- In the figure at the woman’s feet;
- In the uniform of the soldiers on the ground;
- In the two kids’ hat.

The figure of the woman was inspired by *Venus de Milo*. Through this reference to the Classical sculpture Delacroix presented a *modern female nude for the first time* and in an official painting.
In this painting the artist portrayed all the social classes of the French society:

• The woman is leading the **working-class** (classe operaia)
• The young soldier is followed by the **bourgeois** fellow (borghesi)

The other figures in this painting are not defined but they are sketches and this element contribute to represent the idea of **social mix**.

The mass of people together, even if they came from different social classes, fight together for the **restoration of the violated rights**.
CLIL QUESTIONS

• What does the painting «Liberty Leading the People» commemorate?

• How is the pyramidal structure composed?

• Where can we find the colour of the French flag?

• To whom is the woman of the painting inspired?

• Which social classes are portrayed?