Edouard Manet, *Olympia*, 1863, oil on canvas

1. The composition of *Olympia* is taken directly from the Renaissance painting ‘*Venus of Urbino*’ by Titian.
2. Manet was an avant-garde artist who considered his work ‘realist’. He was highly influential on the Impressionists.
3. Olympia was a name frequently used by high class prostitutes of the period.
4. Olympia is shown reclining nude on a bed, however she appears alert and upright.
5. She looks directly towards the viewer, returning our gaze, appearing confrontational.
6. Her left hand is pressed firmly over her genitalia. Manet has used dark shadows on her hand as well as the gold coloured edge of the curtain to draw our attention to this area of her body.
7. Her right hand has been coloured in a way which makes it appear dirty rather than pure and clean.
8. Her figure is heavily outlined in a dark tone to emphasise her form.
9. Her hair is neatly pinned up and there is a large pink flower placed behind one ear, this and the floral fabric she lies on emphasise the theme of femininity.
10. Her hair is styled tightly, mirroring the firm positioning of her left hand over her modesty.
11. The bright white sheets she lies on make her nude figure stand out against the background.
12. Olympia wears jewellery; earrings, a bracelet and a black choker tied around her throat, these emphasise her naked state.
13. She is strongly lit from the front. This gives a harsh appearance to the figure, further emphasising the outline of her figure.
14. Her face is realistic and unsymmetrical, challenging the conventions of traditional female beauty in art.
15. Brushstrokes are loose and gestural, giving the figure’s skin a more realistic appearance.
16. The painting appears spontaneous and unfinished, again breaking with idealism.
17. Dark colours in the background emphasise the paleness of the figure and project her forwards towards the viewer.
18. The paleness of Olympia’s complexion is contrasted by the black maid in the background who brings her a bouquet of flowers, possibly a gift from a male client.
19. One of Olympia’s slippers has fallen off her foot, mirroring the dishevelled appearance of the bed sheets and reminding us of Olympia’s occupation.
20. Interior setting is compact with very little depth, forcing the figure of Olympia towards the viewer and making us aware of her nudity.
21. Olympia is spotlit from the front, lighting appears harsh and this makes the figure and the scene stark and uncompromising.
22. The proportions of her body are accurate making her a realistic female who has not been idealised.
23. A black cat at her feet appears startled, perhaps by our presence and acts as a metaphor for promiscuity, possibly implying the character of Olympia.
24. The scale of the work is large, giving a sense of importance to a contemporary scene.
25. Overall Olympia appears assertive and in control and displays an expression that she may be unhappy with us viewing her in this state of nudity.