

Art:

Plankton or Alien?



Learning Intention

We are using what we have learned about food chains and plankton, to imagine and draw a new species.

Introduction

When seen through a microscope, many species found in plankton look like aliens from a science fiction film! Some of them also have weird adaptations:

- ◆ **Sea gooseberries have sticky tentacles that can be pulled in and vibrating hairs to swim**
- ◆ **Copepods have long feathery feelers to detect movement**
- ◆ **Jellyfish have stinging harpoons to catch prey**
- ◆ **Glass squid (and lots of other animals) can make light**
- ◆ **Plankton can have names that are as strange to us as their appearance: diatoms, salps, copepods, pteropods and medusae**

Instructions

Can you create a new species of plankton? Draw your new species, give it a name and label the special things that help it live adrift in the ocean.

- ◆ **Will it be symmetrical?**
- ◆ **How will it catch or make its food?**
- ◆ **Will it have eyes? Or feelers? Or both?**
- ◆ **How will it move? With hairs, or fins, or undulating wings? Or jets of water like a squid?**
- ◆ **What will it be called?**

Plankton are usually so small that they appear colourless or delicately coloured to us, even when magnified. Tiny hairs on some species can appear in rainbow colours.

Tips for Parents

An image search for plankton on the internet should give pupils some inspiration. Plankton are not featured in the curriculum, but they offer a fantastic opportunity for children's imaginations to run wild – and as marine biologists, we love plankton!

