

Plankton Poem *with artists at Creative Clay and scientists at USF
with poet Sara Ries Dziekonski

The scientist scoops water into a cup
from the Gulf this sun-soaked morning
She lifts from the water's lips a million plankton

She takes two deep breaths:
One from land the other ocean
We breathe because of plankton

We watch with bobbing breath—
as the grubs essential for marine life

zigzag for us

magnified on screen—

white sharks erratic

drivers
 servers during lunch
 rush

New words emerge on currents:

copepod
 diatom
chaetoceros

We have our own names for them:

black-silver dots
 squiggles
tiny crystals

 bugs squishy little
blobs brain cells
 sea clouds

grasshoppers of
a nighttime sky a twilight zone
 shooting stars
universe of black spots

TV static
the visions we see when we're closed-eyed dizzy

Plankton means
 wanderer in Greek
 Not strong enough to swim against
the currents they go where the tides send them—

I analyze my decisions to shreds
How can I flow more
 like plankton feet pressed to wet
 trusting the way I'm pulled—

Think of all the life
jammed into
 a lick of water,
 how plump the breath
 beyond the strongest microscope
 magic that propels us—
beyond what eyes can see