

Vachel Lindsay's poem "The King of Yellow Butterflies" is subtitled "a poem game"; the musical setting is a kind of game as well, a game of skill, full of tongue-twisting, deft turns for the singers. Word painting is used in the setting of "shiver," "whimper," and "each pool is like a looking glass," where the vocal lines make a mirror image. The works as a whole should leave a hovering, insubstantial impression, like a cloud of butterflies.

Duration: c. 3:00

THE KING OF YELLOW BUTTERFLIES
(A Poem Game)

The King of Yellow Butterflies,
The King of Yellow Butterflies,
The King of Yellow Butterflies,
Now orders forth his men.
He says, "The time is almost here
When violets bloom again."
Adown the road the fickle rout
Goes flashing proud and bold,
Adown the road the fickle rout
Goes flashing proud and bold,
Adown the road the fickle rout
Goes flashing proud and bold,
They shiver by the shallow pools,
They shiver by the shallow pools,
They shiver by the shallow pools,
And whimper of the cold.
They drink and drink. A frail pretense!
They love to pose and preen.
Each pool is but a looking glass,
Where their sweet wings are seen.
Each pool is but a looking glass,
Where their sweet wings are seen.
Each pool is but a looking glass,
Where their sweet wings are seen.
Gentlemen adventurers! Gypsies every whit!
They live on what they steal. Their wings
By briars are frayed a bit.
Their loves are light. They have no house.
And if it rains today,
They'll climb into your cattle-shed,
They'll climb into your cattle-shed,
They'll climb into your cattle-shed,
And hide them in the hay,
And hide them in the hay,
And hide them in the hay,
And hide them in the hay.

Vachel Lindsay (1917)

