The Forty-Letter Paradox  The first sentence sets the 40-letter rule, the second sentence demonstrates it, and the third sentence acknowledges the truth of the second sentence. The first and second sentences are true since each has 40 letters, but the third sentence has 41. Thus the third sentence is false, which makes the second sentence false. But the second sentence is true. So the first sentence is false, but it, too, is true. Then the third sentence is false, but it's true...and the merry-go-round of paradoxes keeps on spinning! Interestingly, the problem dissipates when the middle line is dropped and the word "second" changed to "first" in the last line:

A sentence must contain forty letters to be true.
Therefore, the first sentence is a true sentence.

Trio for One Voice  If you read only the odd-numbered words in the first stanza, you get the second stanza. Likewise, if you read the even-numbered words, you get the third stanza.

The Postal Union  Possible answers for the two-step states: 1) MISSISSIPPI (MI) down to MICHIGAN (HI) down to HAWAII. 2) NEW MEXICO (CO) down to COLORADO (OR) down to OREGON. 3) UTAH requires a branching downward from an upward branched state: SOUTH CAROLINA (AR) up from ARKANSAS, then SOUTH CAROLINA (UT) down to UTAH. Unmappable states: IDAHO, KANSAS, KENTUCKY, and TEXAS. Most versatile unmapped state: MARYLAND, with MA, AR, LA, ND. Most versatile mapped state: INDIANA, whose abbreviation IN appears in IL, MN, NC, SC, VA, WV, WI, WV. Note that IDAHO, KANSAS, and KENTUCKY are mappable if they're printed in reverse—OHADI (OH), SASNAK (AK), YKCutNEK (UT, TN, NE). TEXAS, though, can't be mapped no matter how you scramble the eggs!

A Tangled Web of Words  Untangling this paragraph is fairly simple. The punctuation marks serve as clues to mark off the clauses within the clauses within the sentence. In the list below, the first line is the sentence. The second line is the clause which fits into the space in the first line. The third line fits into the space in the second line, and so on. The pivotal phrase is "against his better judgment." In the original paragraph, everything before the pivotal phrase is the beginning of a clause, and everything after it is the ending of a clause. Just read down the left column,
The accused: Big Mike
The verdict: Guilty
The crimes: Murder, Bank robbery
The scenario: Susan changed her name to Melissa and then to Joyce. As Melissa, she killed Ted with a dagger; and as Joyce, she robbed a bank. Then, calling herself Susan again, she accused Big Mike, her boy friend, of the bank robbery to throw the authorities off the track of the murder. Her plan would have been discovered, but Detective Jennings fell in love with her. Big Mike was sent up the river, the poor sap.

Big Mike was found guilty!

make a U-turn, and read up the right column to reconstruct the paragraph.

Big Mike
when Susan
without whom he
whose rugged jaw
as he muttered
"Why did you
who committed
after you changed your name
though nobody--"
but he paused
while he glared at her
even though Melissa thought
which seemed immaterial
for the courtroom
before the verdict
whether Big Mike was guilty
though Melissa
since Ted no longer
however she
when Big Mike
because she blamed him
while the cops
who trusted
although they sensed
until Detective Jennings
against his better judgment

was fingered him
wouldn't have been arrested
was clenched bitterly
lay your rap on me?"
both crimes
from Melissa to Joyce
"--seems to realize
to catch his breath,
in the witness stand
of Ted as her real lover
to the prosecuting attorney
was packed with an angry mob
heard Susan's surprise testimony
could be decided
or framed
murdered him with a dagger
wanted to buy diamonds for her
played her cards
was picked up
for her bank robbery
held him at gunpoint
her innocence
her guilt
fell in love with the lady