TED Talks Resources for Writers

Three anti-social skills to improve your writing - Nadia Kalman.
You need social skills to have a conversation in real life -- but they're quite different from the skills you need to write good dialogue. Educator Nadia Kalman suggests a few "anti-social skills," like eavesdropping and muttering to yourself, that can help you write an effective dialogue for your next story.

The power of a great introduction - Carolyn Mohr
Never underestimate the power of an intriguing start. When analyzing the literary greats like Charles Dickens and Kurt Vonnegut, be inspired by their craft and learn how to write a tantalizing introduction and strong thesis.

Capturing authentic narratives - Michele Weldon.
Journalism can be much more than reporting. An authentic, human narrative touches audiences and keeps them reading. Learn how to shape a human-centered news story, and the importance of facts, context and heart.
http://ed.ted.com/lessons/michele-weldon-capturing-authentic-narratives

How fiction can change reality - Jessica Wise
Reading and stories can be an escape from real life, a window into another world -- but have you ever considered how new fictional experiences might change your perspective on real, everyday life? From Pride and Prejudice to Harry Potter, learn how popular fiction can spark public dialogue and shape culture.
http://ed.ted.com/lessons/jessica-wise-how-fiction-can-change-reality

What makes a hero? - Matthew Winkler
What trials unite not only Harry Potter or Frodo Baggins but many of literature's most interesting heroes? And what do ordinary people have in common with these literary heroes? Matthew Winkler takes us step-by-step through the crucial events that make or break a hero.

An anti-hero of one's own - Tim Adams
How can an anti-hero teach us about the heroic--and sometimes, the unheroic--characteristics that shape a story's protagonist? From jealousy to self-doubt, Tim Adams challenges us to consider how anti-heroes reflect the very mortal weaknesses that can be found within all of us.

The power of simple words - Terin Izil
Long, fancy words designed to show off your intelligence and vocabulary are all very well, but they aren't always the best words. In this short, playful video Terin Izil explains why simple, punchy language is often the clearest way to convey a message.
http://ed.ted.com/lessons/the-power-of-simple-words
**Slowing down time (in writing & film) - Aaron Sitze**
Certain moments in our lives seem to last forever. Whether it is a first kiss or a car crash, time can seem to stretch...or even stop. Aaron Sitze explains how this sensation is conveyed in cinema and how the same conventions can be used to slow down time in your writing.

**Beware of nominalizations (AKA zombie nouns) - Helen Sword**
Few mistakes sour good writing like nominalizations, or, as Helen Sword likes to call them, zombie nouns. Zombie nouns transform simple and straightforward prose into verbose and often confusing writing. Keep your nouns away from elongating nominalizations!

**The case against “good” and “bad” - Marlee Neel**
Don’t take the easy route! Instead, use this little trick to improve your writing -- let go of the words “good” and “bad,” and push yourself to illustrate, elucidate and illuminate your world with language.

**Become a slam poet in five steps - Gayle Danley**
With enough passion and practice, becoming a slam poet is within your reach. Explore a distant memory on paper, then read it out loud. Edit. Try reading it out loud again, and add your finishing touches. Gayle Danley offers five steps to being a slam poet -- while being downright poetic in the process.

**The art of the metaphor - Jane Hirshfield**
How do metaphors help us better understand the world? And, what makes a good metaphor? Explore these questions with writers like Langston Hughes and Carl Sandburg, who have mastered the art of bringing a scene or emotion to life.

**Mining literature for deeper meanings - Amy E. Harter**
Writing a great English paper can be tough because literature doesn’t always reveal its deeper meanings immediately. You might not know Mr. Darcy’s true feelings for Elizabeth Bennett in Jane Austen’s Pride and Prejudice or grasp the complex moral universe of Toni Morrison’s Beloved at first reading. Amy E. Harter offers a few tips on how to read and write more critically and thoughtfully.
Situational irony: The opposite of what you think - Christopher Warner
Leaps and bounds separate that which is ironic and that which many people simply say is ironic. Christopher Warner wants to set the record straight: Something is ironic if and only if it is the exact opposite of what you would expect.

What is verbal irony? - Christopher Warner
At face value, the lines between verbal irony, sarcasm, and compliments can be blurry. After all, the phrase 'That looks nice' could be all three depending on the circumstances. In the final of a three part series on irony, Christopher Warner gets into the irony you may use most often and most casually: verbal irony.
http://ed.ted.com/lessons/what-is-verbal-irony-christopher-warner

In on a secret? That’s dramatic irony - Christopher Warner
You’re in a movie theater, watching the new horror flick. The audience knows something that the main character does not. The audience sees the character's actions are not in his best interest. What's that feeling -- the one that makes you want to shout at the screen? Christopher Warner identifies this storytelling device as dramatic irony.
http://ed.ted.com/lessons/in-on-a-secret-that-s-dramatic-irony-christopher-warner

Why the shape of your screen matters - Brian Gervase
Watching a movie at home isn’t quite the same experience as seeing it at a movie theater -- but why? Learn how changes in aspect ratio affect every film, and why your television might not be delivering the whole picture.