Elements of Good Writing excerpted/paraphrased from Stanton’s TED Talk with some CCSS additions

* Know your punchline, your ending, before you begin. Make a promise that it will be worth our time.
* Establish your theme: Confirm some truth that deepens the understanding of who we are as human beings. A strong theme always runs through a well-told story. Capture a truth from your life. Help us experience the similarities between ourselves and others, real and imagined.
* Evoke natural, real wonder. Provide mystery, suspense, growth and/or resolution (CCSS).
* Make us work for understanding, without making it feel like work. Make use of the Unifying Theory of 2 + 2, as well as show-not-tell, the rule of three’s and literary techniques, such as allusion, satire, sarcasm, irony or understatement (CCSS). Implication draws us in. Stories are inevitable but not predictable. Make us curious.
* Create anticipation for what will happen next and how all the moments of anticipation will come to an end. Without change, the story dies. William Archer, author and theater critic, once said, “Drama is anticipation mingled with uncertainty.” Archer (1856-1924) promoted Henrik Ibsen and George Bernard Shaw.
* Build tension by creating honest conflicts with truth that creates doubt in possible outcomes. All well-drawn characters have a spine (a need or goal) and an itch they can’t scratch. Make us care.