

“Beneath the rule of men entirely great the pen is mightier than the sword” (Edward George Bulwer-Lytton, *Richelieu*, 1838 II, ii)

One pen can change the world. A pen appears as if it is just a physical, insignificant object, but it is much more significant because a pen can affect the world and its inhabitants. Although most pens are not fancy and many have been chewed on by nervous students and have run out of ink at the worst possible moments, they have led to many important events throughout history. These events include the ending of many wars, such as World War II ending with the Paris Peace Treaties and the beginning of new nations like the United States of America with the Declaration of Independence. Furthermore, a small, seemingly insignificant pen can create or destroy peace. It can be used in positive, beneficial ways and unfortunately, in negative and dangerous ways, such as the brainwashing letters and speeches given by Adolf Hitler to the Germans. Throughout history the pen has appeared to have a greater impact than the sword on people.

Many independence and civil rights movements have shown that the pen is more powerful than the sword when it comes to bringing about change. For example, Mohandas Gandhi was a major leader for the Indian independence movement and he believed in using non-violence and civil disobedience to bring about independence for India. He used his speeches and writings to get people to rally behind his cause of achieving independence through nonviolence. Secondly, Martin Luther King Jr. used his writings and words in order to achieve full equality for African Americans. He did not use violence to bring about equality, instead he used his speeches. King's famous “I Had a Dream” speech helped to capture the emotions of those in the United States and those who read this speech were then motivated to go and work to bring an end to

racial inequality. He used the pen to get people to support him instead of using violence so that people would not fear him and then would support his important and influential cause.

In 1517 Martin Luther brought about change to the church not by violence but instead by using the pen. He published the *95 Theses* which became the foundation of the Protestant Reformation and brought about much change to certain aspects of the Catholic Church. He could have fought against the church to change certain practices that he did not like, but instead he used the pen to write down what he did not like and this led to change. This change was much less violent and invasive as the change that he could have potentially brought about with violence.

When two nations get in disagreements, they usually try to use their words to talk out the problem and come up with a solution instead of fighting each other. During the Cold War if the United States and the Soviet Union did not decide to use their words instead of violence to stop the Cuban Missile Crisis it could have caused the deaths of millions of people. Instead they used their words first and were able to solve the problem. The Soviet Union promised to take the missiles out of a Cuba as long as the United States promised not to invade Cuba. Therefore, the United States and Cuba were able to work out a peaceful solution to their previous disagreements with words and writings, rather than by using violence.

Even though the pen appears to be mightier than the sword in positive, beneficial ways, it also appears to be mightier than the sword in negative, dangerous situations. The pen has been shown to be more powerful than the sword even in ways that have led to harm to others. Adolf Hitler's words were so powerful that they were able to convince people to slaughter other innocent humans. After World War I, the Germans did not blame the Jews for all their hardships

but once Hitler started to rise to power he used his words to get the people to turn all their anger from being defeated into Anti-Semitism. One pen with one idea, belief, or order can cause thousands of deaths but a sword can only kill one person at a time.

I have learned from my own experiences that the pen is indeed more powerful than the sword. When I was younger and would get in fights with my siblings we would mostly just hit each other and then a few minutes after the fight we would forget it ever happened and we would not be mad at each other. Now since we are all older instead of physically fighting with each other we use our words to shout insults at each other when we are in a fight. The aftermath of these fights is usually much worse than our physical fights because we will always remember what the other person said to us and it is very hard for them to take it back. When one is physically hurt by violence, pain is usually only temporary, depending on the severity of the pain. However, when one is hurt by words or written insults, the pain is much deeper than physical pain. This kind of pain severs deep into the victim's internal being, leaving lasting and very detrimental effects.

People's own words and writings are much more powerful than any sword or violent weapon. Someone's words never die out but are eternal; a sword just kills one person at a time but it is never able to kill an idea.

Rebuttal

“In war there is no substitute for victory. ... Whoever said the pen is mightier than the sword never saw a machine gun.” (General Douglas MacArthur)

- When the terrorist bombed the World Trade Center's they were able to achieve their goal of terrorizing Americans by using violence instead of words.
- Sometimes in certain situations change can be brought about quicker through war than words which is apparent in the Abolitionist movement. The Abolitionist before the Civil War tried to end slavery by non-violent means such as newspapers and protests but they were unsuccessful. Once the North won the Civil War slavery was quickly ended in all states in America. This shows that sometimes a war can be effective than words themselves.
- During World War II Harry Truman first tried to talk to Japan to get them to surrender but when they wouldn't he decided that it was best to drop the atomic bomb instead of risking the deaths of many American soldiers. This event revealed that sometimes words are less efficient than violence.

- If people are closed-minded in their beliefs and ideas no matter how much someone tries to use words to solve problems with them ultimately violence is the only way to get across to that person.
- A pen can only tell people to stop but a sword physically will stop someone because that person is afraid of being killed.
- Even though the Treaty of Versailles was signed after World War I which stated that the Germans could not build up an army, the Germans still did this and went against the pen without consequence showing the sword is mightier than the pen.