Unit 1 Final Essay

“The pen is mightier than the sword” is an old adage written by English author Edward Bulwer-Lytton in 1839. However, the idea has numerous predecessors, such as Greek playwright Euripides’ “The tongue is mightier than the blade,” Islamic prophet Muhammad’s “The ink of the scholar is holier than the blood of the martyr,” and William Shakespeare’s “many wearing rapiers are afraid of goosequills.”

Think carefully about what this adage means and what has been proven to you about it over the course of the quarter. Consider George Orwell’s novel Nineteen Eighty-Four and at least one other text from chapters 1 and 2 of your course companion to explain whether or not the pen really is mightier than the sword.

Your paper should be 3-5 pages, in MLA format, and should use your knowledge of rhetoric and rhetorical analysis in your argument.

The three quotations below provide additional examples of the adage in use.

In her speech about the violence of the Taliban, delivered on July 12th, 2013 at the United Nations, Malala Yousafzai said:

“We realize the importance of our voice when we are silenced. In the same way, when we were in Swat, the north of Pakistan, we realized the importance of pens and books when we saw the guns. The wise saying, ‘The pen is mightier than the sword.’ It is true. The extremists are afraid of books and pens. The power of education frightens them. They are afraid of women. The power of the voice of women frightens them. This is why they killed 14 innocent students in the recent attack in Quetta. And that is why they kill female teachers.”

In a presentation on September 10th, 2011, in Sacramento, California, Ghanaian Kwaku A Danso said:

“The power of the pen has changed and keeps changing. The power of the pen lies in and implies the ability to communicate […] from the bottom up and also the top down from leadership. Effective leadership will need to communicate any visions to the people in the organization or society. While we may focus on political leadership, let us remember that these leaders of organizations in critical times in recent history have include men like Kwame Nkrumah of Ghana, Mohandas Gandhi of India, Lee Iacocca of Chrysler, Martin Luther King, Jr., and Barack Obama of America. We should not forget that the pen can also be used to write bad or negative things, as human communication can also be used to incite and invoke the devil in us -we may perhaps recall men with fiery speeches such as Adolf Hitler and Saddam Hussein, and our own Jerry Rawlings of Ghana. In short the pen is mightier than the sword but the human will behind the pen to do good for humanity and love one another is even mightier. Let us use our pens to help influence change for human development in Ghana, Africa and the world we live in.”
Controversial leader Marcus Garvey said:

“The pen is mightier than the sword, but the tongue is mightier than them both put together.”