In 1803, the United States purchased an area of land from France called Louisiana. The land stretched from the Mississippi river to present-day Montana and covered some . France had originally explored the land, but ceded it to Spain in 1763. In 1801, with Napoleon’s France conquering much of Europe, Spain returned Louisiana to France. The United States felt threatened by the possibility of a Napoleonic colony in North America. President Jefferson sent diplomats to France to attempt to buy New Orleans and West Florida. In need of money to finance its other wars, France sold the whole of Louisiana to the U.S. for  dollars.

The Louisiana Purchase doubled the land area of the United States, but not all Americans supported Jefferson’s decision. Read the following documents to learn why Jefferson’s Federalist rivals opposed the Louisiana Purchase.

**“Purchase of Louisiana” – Alexander Hamilton**

*Source: “Purchase of Louisiana” an editorial written by Alexander Hamilton for the New York Evening Post, July 1803.*

*The purchase of New Orleans is essential to the peace and prosperity of our Western country, and opens a free and valuable market to our commercial states. This purchase will probably make it seem like Mr. Jefferson is brilliant. Any man, however, who possesses any amount of intelligence, will easily see that the purchase is the result of lucky coincidences and unexpected circumstances and not the result of any wise or thoughtful actions on the part of Jefferson’s administration. As to the vast region west of the Mississippi, it is a wilderness with numerous tribes of Indians. And when we consider the present territory of the United States, and that not one-sixteenth is yet under occupation, the possibility that this new purchase will be a place of actual settlement seems unlikely. If our own citizens do eventually settle this new land, it would weaken our country and central government. On the whole, we can honestly say that this purchase is at best extremely problematic.*

**Question:**

1. **Close Reading:** Based on this document, why did Federalists oppose the Louisiana Purchase?

**Letters – Rufus King and Thomas Pickering**

*Source: The following two letters are written between two Federalists. Rufus King was a Senator from New York and Thomas Pickering was a Senator from Massachusetts.*

*Rufus King to Timothy Pickering, November 4, 1803*

*According to the Constitution, Congress may admit new states. But can the President sign treaties forcing Congress to do so? According to the Louisiana Treaty, the territory must be formed into states and admitted into the Union. Will Congress be allowed to set any rules for their admission? Since slavery is legal and exists in Louisiana, and the treaty states that we must protect the property of the inhabitants, won’t we be forced to admit the new states as slave states? Doing so will worsen the problem of unequal representation from slave and free states.*

*Timothy Pickering to Rufus King. March 4, 1804*

*I am disgusted with the men who now rule us. The coward at the head [Jefferson] is like a French revolutionary. While he talks about humanity, he enjoys the utter destruction of his opponents. We have too long witnessed his general wickedness—his cruel removals of faithful officers and the substitution of corruption and immorality for honesty.*

**Question:**

1. **Close Reading:** Based on these documents, why did Federalists oppose the Louisiana Purchase?

**Section Questions:**

1. **Corroboration:** Where do the documents agree? Where do they conflict?
2. **Corroboration:** Based on all of the documents, what can you say about why the Federalists opposed the Louisiana Purchase?