**The Pursuit of Happyness**

**Movie Club Study Guide**

**Movie Summary:**

Chris Gardner is a salesman struggling to pay the rent and his taxes. His girlfriend, Linda, leaves him and he is left to take care of their son, Christopher. Gardner is determined to survive and make his life better and lands an internship in a competitive stockbroker training program. The movie takes us through struggles of homelessness, single parenting, and making the rent in a fantastic story of a man’s quest to realize his American dream.

**List of Characters:**

* Chris Gardner (Will Smith) – The film is about this character. He was in the Navy for a while. He has no higher education but was the top of his high school graduating class. He wants to become a stockbroker to have a better life, and he works through many difficulties to achieve that goal.
* Christopher (Jaden Smith) – He is Gardner’s son. He goes to daycare, likes basketball, and goes with his father on many of his sales calls.
* Linda (Thandie Newton) – Gardner’s girlfriend. Christopher’s mother. She leaves to New York when she gets fed up with their unstable living and economical situation in San Francisco, leaving Gardner alone to care for their son.

**Setting:**

The movie is set in San Francisco in 1981. Ronald Reagan was president of the United States at this time and America in an economic recession similar to the one they have been experiencing in the past three years.

**Vocabulary:**

* *Rubik’s Cube* – The square cube toy that was very popular in the 1980s.
* *Filing an extension* – This a term we use regarding our taxes. We fill out the paperwork to ask the government for more time to pay the money we owe in taxes.
* *IRS (Internal Revenue Service)* – The organization that is responsible for collecting taxes from US citizens and workers.
* *Single parent* – When one person is responsible for raising his/her child, that person is a single parent.
* *Homeless shelter* – Homeless shelters are free places for people to sleep in America. They are often part of a religious organization and are most often located in big cities in America.
* *Social services* – This is a government organization that takes care of family members. If a child is abused or not being taken care of properly, social services will often step in and remove the child from the living situation and place the child in a temporary home.
* *Cold calling* – This is a sales term. It means the caller must make a telephone call to a person he or she does not already know and try to get the sale.

**Key Issues & Themes:**

* Single parenting
* Homelessness in America
* Unemployment
* “Making” the rent
* Following your dreams
* “The American Dream”

**Questions to Consider:**

* If you were in Gardner’s situation, what would you do?
* This story is relevant today in America because we are recovering from a recession. Are there such cases in Ukraine?
* Does this story fit in with your current opinions and ideas about America and/or Americans? Why? Why not?