

Sliding Doors Summary

Sliding Doors is a movie that follows the life of a young woman in two parallel plots after she in one scenario catches the subway train and in another scenario misses the train. The movie's challenge is to keep the audience interested in both story lines. This is done in a number of ways, including moving the woman's life in each plot into the same physical space so that they can appear in the same scene but not be aware of the parallel scenario.

Initially, after the main character, Helen, misses the train, the movie quickly cuts back and forth between the two versions of her character, inside the train and out. The time between these cuts lengthens as the movie begins to develop each sequence. Sounds from the other scenario are often faded into a scene when scenarios are about to switch, which blends the two stories together.

In one story, Helen is still with her boyfriend, Jerry, who unbeknownst to her, has been cheating. In the other story, Helen meets a new man, James, with whom she falls in love. In both stories, Helen gets really drunk – in the first, Jerry takes care of her, and in the second, her female friend takes care of her. The similarities between the stories help the audience to draw connections between the parallel plots and to compare Helen's two situations as a result of making and missing the subway.

In order to differentiate between the two Helens, the emotional change is coupled with a physical change – the new Helen dyes her brown hair blonde and cuts it short. Both Helens change jobs after the pre-train-missing Helen is fired.

There is one scene in which one Helen is walking with her friend on the sidewalk next to the river and the other Helen is on a boat in the river as she cheers on James as he rows. Both Helens are in the same physical place at the same time, nearly merging the two stories. This helps to make them relevant to one another in the overall plot of the movie.

There are two instances in which the audience is reminded of the initial critical event of missing the subway as the doors close. At one point, Helen finds out that she is pregnant with James' baby. As she goes to his work to tell him, she finds out that he is married, and dumbstruck, she puts her head on the wall. She happens to be standing next to the office building doors – sliding glass doors that open and close over and over as she is in the sensor's line-of-sight. In the final scene of the movie, Helen misses the elevator walking out of the hospital, and since she has to wait for the next one, she ends up riding the same elevator as James. This Helen was in the parallel story opposite of the James storyline, and so now the two stories meet in the final scene.

There are similarities between the two stories that make the plot lines alike: the woman Jerry is having an affair with gets pregnant, Helen becomes pregnant (in one story by Jerry, in the other, by James), Helen faints in both stories (at the same time).

The Helen that made the train found Jerry cheating on her, met James, fell in love, then got hit by a van and died. The Helen that missed the train also went through the pain of finding Jerry cheating on her, but she lives in the end and meets James in the elevator. In both stories, Helen loses her baby.