

# Firewall

- 1 *Firewall* was published in 1998, just as the Internet and email were becoming part of daily life in the United States and Europe. Throughout the novel and film, Wallander, our middle-aged Everyman, is stymied by new technology, from computers to cell phones to alarm systems, cash machines, and online dating. In fact, it is a “system crash” that sets much of the plot of *Firewall* in motion. As Wallander muses to himself at the end of the novel, “I can’t deny this is how it is now. But I also can’t deny that I don’t understand a single bit of it.” What do you think Mankell is saying about how technology has changed our world? How has technology changed your or your family’s life in the last several years? Do you—or those you know—ever feel bewildered, like Wallander, by how the world is changing?
- 2 The scene that opens *Firewall* is one of the most visually and emotionally striking in the film, yet in the novel the same scene happens “off stage.” Why do you think the filmmaker chose to show the murder, and to depict it with the series of shots he used? After you have watched the film or read the novel, view this short scene again. How does it set up many of the themes of the story, and hint at important plot points? Why do you prefer either seeing the murder, as in the film, or having it occur offstage, as in the novel?
- 3 At the end of the novel, Mankell writes about Wallander: “It was as if firewalls were not a phenomenon relegated to the world of computers. He had a firewall inside himself, and he didn’t always know how to get past it.” Though the film does not literally repeat this line, how does the idea behind it inform the scenes in which Wallander interacts with others? In this context, what do you make of the fact that the director chose Johnny Cash’s song “Ring of Fire” to play in the background of the scene with Wallander’s daughter where the electricity finally comes back on in Ystad?
- 4 Wallander speaks often of the need for intuition as a policeman, and yet he fails to intuit Ella’s connection to the case he is investigating until it’s too late. (As he says to himself in the film, “I didn’t want to see it.”) When did your intuition as a mystery aficionado tell you that there was something suspicious about Ella? Have you, like Wallander, ever let an aspect of your personal life cloud your judgment about a professional matter?

- 5 The major theme of this story is summed up toward the end of the novel: “During the past thirty years, a society had been emerging that he [Wallander] did not fully recognize. In his work he was constantly confronted with the results of brutal forces that ruthlessly flung people to the outer margins.... These changes were accompanied by a parallel development in which members of society were being connected ever more tightly by new technological innovations. But this highly efficient electronic work came at the cost of increased vulnerability to sabotage and terror.” Do you agree with Wallander’s viewpoint? How vulnerable do you feel? What changes—due to adaptations to or protection against terrorism, including cyberterrorism—have you seen or experienced?

WALLANDER IS A LEFT BANK PICTURES/YELLOW BIRD/TKBC SERIES FOR WGBH CO-PRODUCED WITH THE BBC, DEGETO, WGBH BOSTON, AND FILM I SKANE.  
THE EXECUTIVE PRODUCERS ARE FRANCIS HOPKINSON, ANDY HARRIES, KENNETH BRANAGH, OLE SONDBERG, ANNI FAURBYE, REBECCA EATON, AND HANS-WOLFGANG JURGAN.  
REBECCA EATON IS EXECUTIVE PRODUCER OF MASTERPIECE. FUNDING IS PROVIDED BY PUBLIC TELEVISION VIEWERS.

MASTERPIECE, MASTERPIECE THEATRE, AND MYSTERY! ARE TRADEMARKS OR REGISTERED TRADEMARKS OF THE WGBH EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION.  
CLOSED CAPTIONED FOR VIEWERS WHO ARE DEAF OR HARD-OF-HEARING. ©2009 WGBH EDUCATIONAL FOUNDATION.



**MASTERPIECE**

[pbs.org/masterpiece](http://pbs.org/masterpiece)  PBS