

## A snapshot in time telling the drama of the 20th century



Momme Brodersen  
KLASSENBIOD MIT  
WALTER BENJAMIN  
*Eine Spurensuche*



Momme Brodersen  
**Group Portrait with  
Walter Benjamin**

[Klassenbild mit Walter  
Benjamin]

A search for traces

Siedler

240 pages

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With many illustrations

**Momme Brodersen** was born in 1951 and studied German, history, education and sociology. He has been lecturing in German language, literature and cultural history at the University of Palermo since 1977. He also contributes to the *taz*, *Frankfurter Rundschau*, *Süddeutsche Zeitung*, *Die Zeit* and various radio stations.

In 1912, 22 young men attending the Kaiser-Friedrich-Schule in Berlin-Charlottenburg put their names down for their final exams. Walter Benjamin was one of them. The eminent German-Jewish writer was, however, not the only one later to make a name for himself.

Five of his class mates were killed in World War I; they had volunteered for armed service. Others were deported by the Nazis and murdered in concentration camps. Some of them drifted to the right-wing fringes of society; one of them became one of the main suppliers of Zyklon B in the Third Reich. Walter Benjamin himself took his own life in the border village of Portbou between Spain and France in 1940 while fleeing his persecutors.

This book shows a micro-view of a piece of German history. The fates of the 22 students about to leave school in 1912 exemplify and show up the rifts and existential breaks in the dealings of Germans and Jews with each other, from the Wilhelmina period until right into the 1950s. The class photograph shows one short moment when working and living together still seemed to be possible.

### Press

"Momme Brodersen has carefully researched the history of the secondary school graduating class of 1912 of Kaiser

Friederich School in Berlin. His attempt to reconstruct the individual life stories is a contribution to the research into the upper-class mentality of the 20th century." *Süddeutsche Zeitung*

"Brodersen's book is filled with details and insights into the difficulty in understanding these details. This is great narrative." *Berliner Zeitung*