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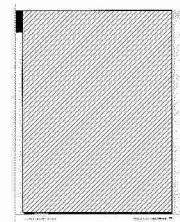
THE NEXT BIG

Literary Wunderkind

Celia Bell is writing her own path to success.

BY JESS BLUMBERG

Celia Bell says it's hard for her to remember a time when she didn't want to be a writer. "Pretty much when I decided I wasn't going to be a cowgirl anymore, I wanted to write," says the recent Bryn Mawr School graduate. So, inspired by Greek myths and C.S. Lewis, Bell wrote several short stories throughout her childhood. Then, with the encouragement of her high school English teacher, Bill Waters, she started submitting her work to publications and contests. The result? She was published in *The New York Times Magazine*, won a gold portfolio in the 2009 Scholastic Art & Writing Awards, was a finalist in the 2009 Young Arts competition, and was picked as one of only 20 Presidential Scholars in the Arts in the entire country. As if that isn't enough, Bell—who will attend Columbia University next fall—is working on her first official novel. She describes it as "half Jack Kerouac story and half myth," and adds, "I like to start with something ordinary and see how weird I can make it." Where does Bell get her literary inspiration? Well, her parents *do* happen to be renowned writers Madison Smartt Bell and Elizabeth Spiers. But 18-year-old Bell insists, "I came to writing all on my own."



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