Laura Solomon's novel Instant Messages, primarily aimed at a Young Adult readership, will hold the interest of all ages. It's about the troubles faced by London-teenager Olivia Best. Her mother has just abandoned the family on Christmas Day to live with her female yoga teacher; her twin sister is self-harming, her Dad's an out-of-work novelist whose new girlfriend has a fetish for mopping the kitchen and hoovering all hours and there's a gang of young thugs waiting for the moment they can give this computer-bright loner a beating in a dark alley - and yet, does Livvie despair? Not a bit of it. She cares, true, indeed she's arguably the only mature person in her family; but she stays hopeful and for most of the time cheerful. Her natural intelligence, tolerance and good humour carry her through. A lively, funny and engrossing first-person narrative.
JAMES WATSON, author of Fair Game: The Steps of Odessa.