Questions to help annotation of Hamlet's soliloquy in Act 2 Scene 2

1. This soliloquy shows Hamlet going over various incidents and ideas. Write a summary of what the soliloquy is about. Use the notes on page 96 of the text to help you if you are stuck.
2. Throughout this speech Hamlet refers to himself in all sorts of derogatory ways. Using a coloured pen or pencil underline all the references you can find. Remember to write a key or legend on the soliloquy so you know why you have underlining in a particular colour.
3. Now think how you could use the above in your coursework essay. Write a few sentences (write it on the back of the soliloquy sheet if you like) to explain how Hamlet's offensive words about himself, here and in previous speeches, tell us anything about his character, state of mind or problems. You might start, 'Hamlet's continual references to himself as vile and cowardly, such as ': …' and '….' emphasise to the audience that …'
4. As before Hamlet uses a number of questions in the soliloquy. Underline or highlight them and then comment somewhere on your sheet what they might tell us about Hamlet. Look at the way the questions stop about half way through this speech. What might this suggest about Hamlet's state of mind towards the end of the speech?
5. Find the references to Claudius in this speech and underline them (in a different colour to your other underlining if possible). Do you notice any similarities between these references and earlier ones?
6. Explain, on the soliloquy, why 'slave's offal' is such an effective way to describe Claudius's dead body.
7. From line 541 to the end of the soliloquy Hamlet seems much calmer and determined to revenge his father's death. Why do you think he is more confident and how is this expressed through his speech?