Hamlet
Soliloquy Analysis

Hamlet's soliloquies

1	1.2.133-164	O that this too, too solid flesh would melt....
2	2.2.577-634	O what a rogue and peasant slave am I....
3	3.1.64-98	To be or not to be....
4	3.2.419-432	'Tis now the very witching time of night....
5	3.3.77-101	Now might I do it pat....
6	4.4.34-69	How all occasions do inform against me....

Claudius's soliloquies

1	3.3.40-76, 102-103	O my offence is rank....
2	4.3.67-77	And England, if my love thou hold'st at aught....

Some questions

1. Who delivers the soliloquy?
2. In what act and scene the soliloquy occur?
3. What specific incident or what words of other characters seem to prompt the soliloquy?
4. What actual facts does the soliloquy contain about the plot? about the character's motivation and actions?
5. What general mood or frame of mind is the character in at the point of the soliloquy? What one dominant emotion would you have an actor work to communicate through the soliloquy, and what are your second and third choices? Should the actor show a shift in emotion or attitude? At what point?
6. What inferences can we draw from the soliloquy about the character's attitudes toward circumstances, other characters, life, or fate? Have any of those attitudes changed?
7. Does the soliloquy seem to divide naturally into parts? How many parts, and where are the divisions? Do the main ideas appear to be arranged in a deliberate order?
8. Does one question or problem dominate the soliloquy? Do any answers or solutions appear?
9. Do any words, phrases, or grammatical constructions recur during the soliloquy? What effect would they create on stage?
10. What images in the soliloquy would you have an actor try to stress? How do they relate to the rest of the play? Do any images recur during the soliloquy?
11. What figurative language stands out in the soliloquy? What irony? Would you have the actor stress it in delivery? How?

Some critical performance questions

12. Do you want the actor standing, sitting, leaning, crouching? Where on the stage should the actor stand? Do you want the actor to move during the soliloquy? At what point in the speech and to where on the stage? Does the text give the actor any business during the soliloquy? Do you want to add some? Where and what?
13. How do you want the actor to read the soliloquy? At what general pace should it proceed? Where should the pace change? Where do you want the actor to pause, and for how long? What facial expressions do you want the actor to use, and where should they change?
14. What scenery and what props should be visible during the soliloquy? Do you want to project any images onto the stage? What kind of lighting would be most effective? Would it change? Would any sound effects enhance the soliloquy?