Activity - Calculating Time of Death using Rigor Mortis

Directions: Refer to Rigor Mortis Reference Tables (in class or on my website)

Part A - Estimate the approx. time of death for the following situations. Explain your answers:
1. A body was found with no evidence of rigor.

2. A body was found exhibiting rigor throughout the entire body.

3. A body was found exhibiting rigor in the chest, arms, face, and neck.

4. A body was discovered with rigor present in the legs, but no rigor in the upper torso.

5. A body was discovered with most muscles relaxed, except for the face.

Part B - Estimate the time of death based on some of the factors affecting rigor mortis:
6. A body was discovered in the weight room of a gym. A man had been doing “arm curls” with heavy weights. The only place rigor was present was in his arms.

7. A frail, elderly woman’s body was found in her apartment on a hot summer’s evening. Her body exhibited advanced rigor in all places except her face and neck.

8. A body was discovered in the woods. The man had been missing for two days. The average temperature the past 48 hours was 50 degrees Fahrenheit. When the body was discovered, it was at peak rigor.

9. An obese man was discovered in his air-conditioned hotel room sitting in a chair in front of the television. The air conditioner was set for 65 degrees Fahrenheit. When the coroner arrived, the man’s body exhibited rigor in his upper body only.

10. After a run, a young woman was attacked and killed. The perpetrator hid the body in the trunk of a car and fled. When the woman’s body was discovered, rigor was noticed in her thighs only.