



Shy

The different ways that the word *shy* is used can be categorized into three themes: anxious, suspicious, and deficient. *Shy* is primarily used as an adjective to describe how someone is feeling or looking. When *shy* is used as a verb, its meaning relates to movement; however, the cause of the movement is linked to a feeling of anxiety or suspicion.

Students may encounter each of these themes within the texts they read. Although being shy is often thought of as a negative trait, students may encounter an unconventional hero who uses their shyness as a strength by developing their observational skills. Or maybe students will read a text about a rabbit who shied away from a garden patch because a farmer was harvesting crops.

Follow-Up

- How is being distrustful different than feeling anxious?
- Have you ever felt shy in a large group of people? How did you feel?
- How might being shy be a strength and not a weakness?

The Spanish Connection

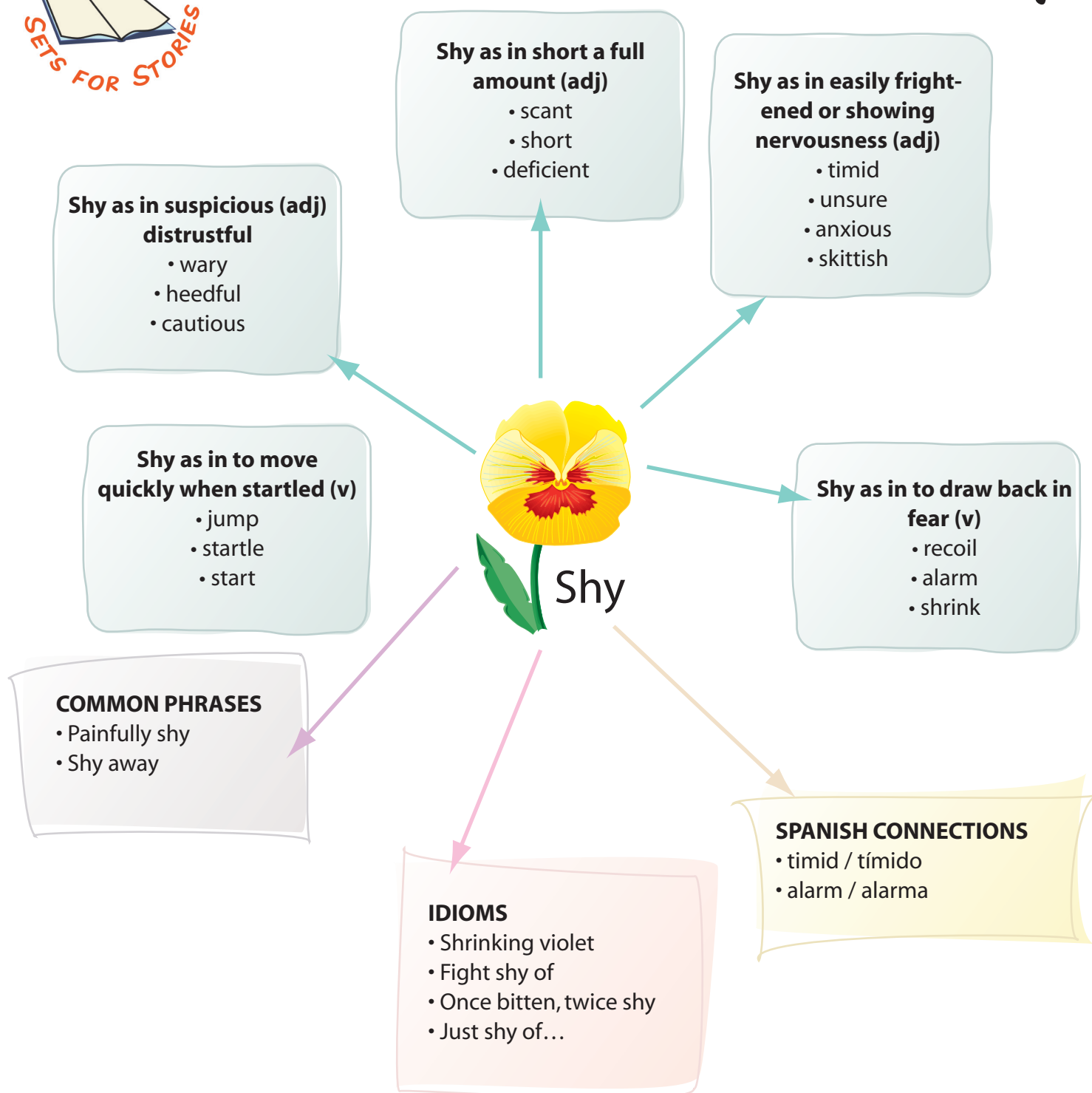
The origin of the word *shy* can be traced back to the Old English word *scéoh*, in connection to Middle High German *schiech* and various other words in Middle Dutch, Middle Danish, and Norwegian, all meaning timid. Although *shy* does not have a Spanish cognate, *timid* does—*tímido*.

Word Changes

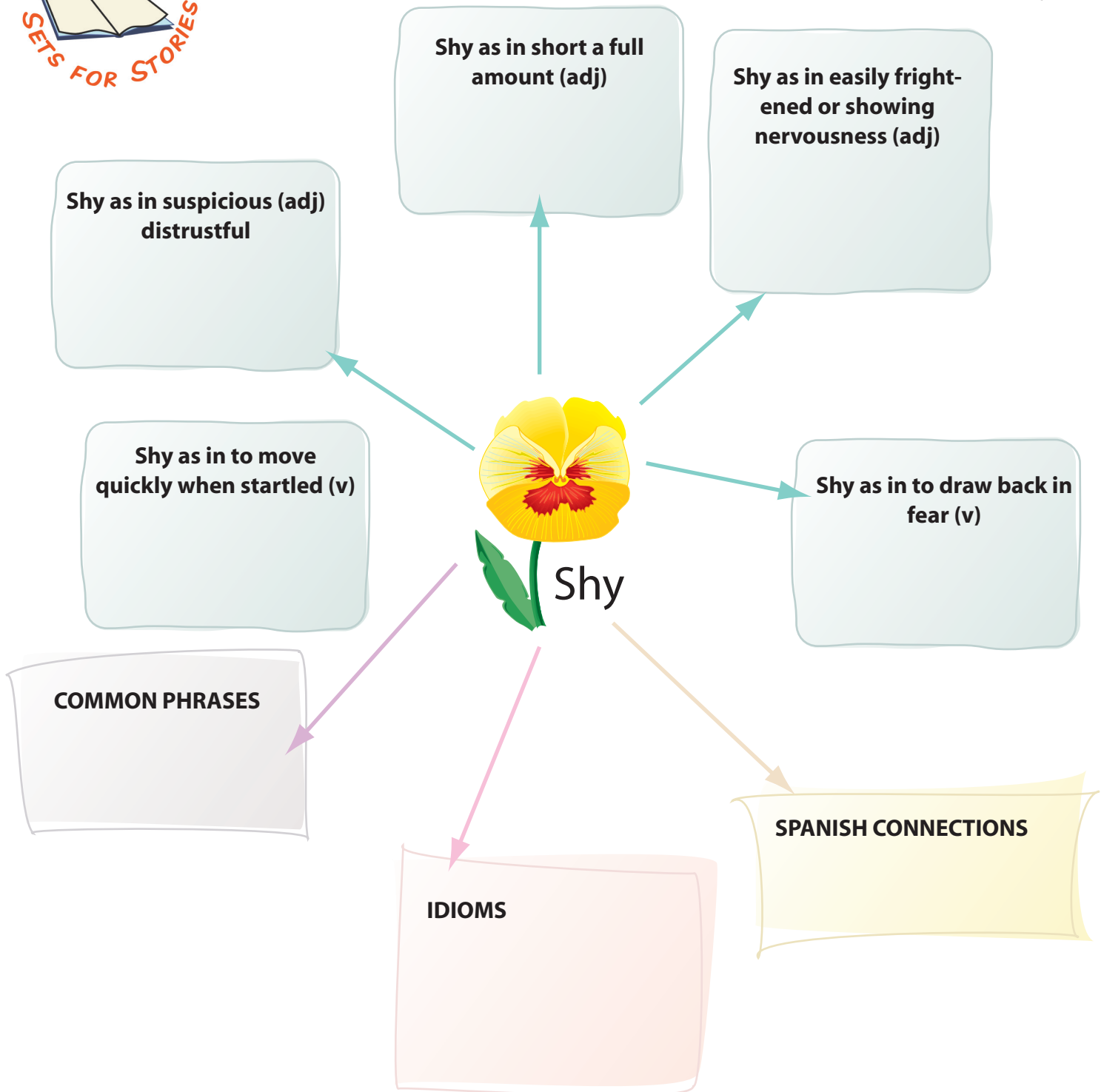
Although students may not be familiar with the idiom “shrinking violet,” they may be familiar with some of the visual representations of this phrase. For example, the two *shy violets* in Disney’s *Alice in Wonderland* in the garden scene. Or the character Shy Violet from the late 1980’s TV show, *Rainbow Brite*. A more current example is the character Violet from Disney Pixar’s *The Incredibles*. Although it is difficult to trace the origin of the idiom, it gained popularity in the late 1800’s in both Europe and North America, possibly because violets were, at the time, the third most commercially grown flower.



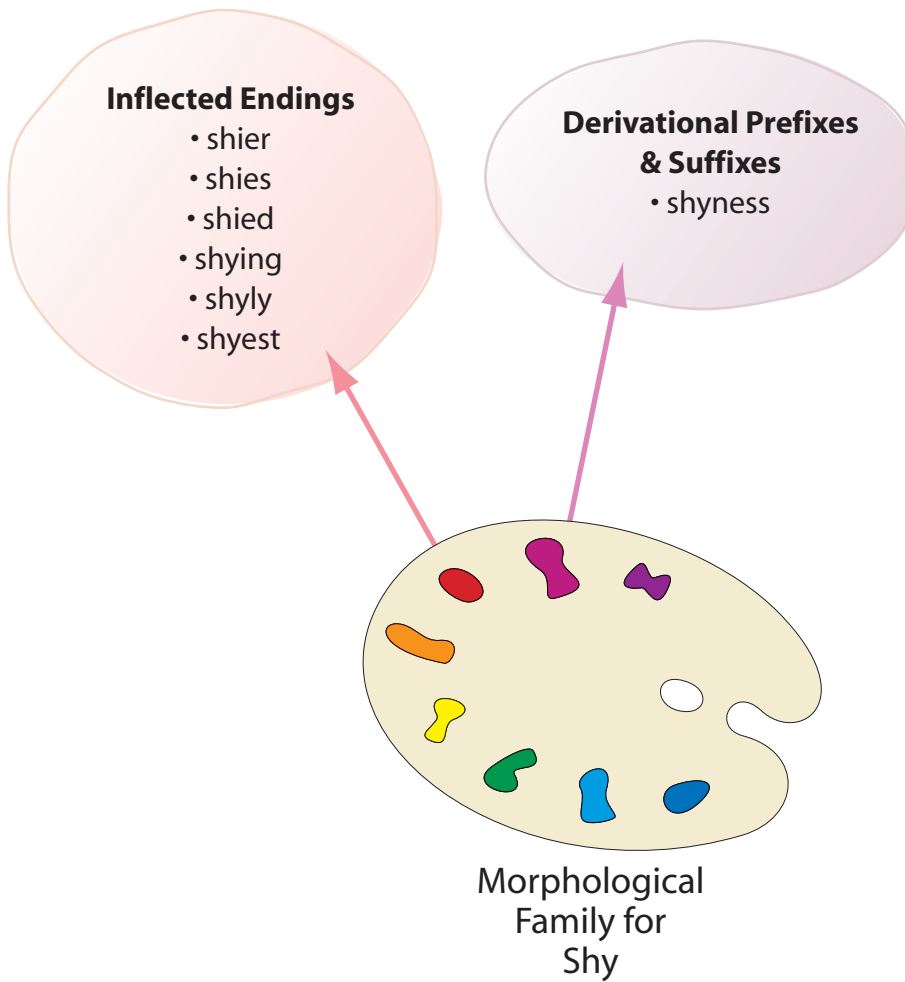
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